



Managing Volunteers Course Assessment

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<i>New Zealand Fire Service 2011 Volunteer Sustainability Report</i>	

Introduction

Welcome to your assessment for Managing Volunteers. Here, you will practise applying the theories and concepts you have learned on the course to the New Zealand Fire Service (NZFS) context.

For this assessment, you will need to research and identify a brigade, regional or national volunteer need or problem.

If you have any questions or would like further information please feel free to discuss your questions on the course assessment forum or contact your tutor.

Learning outcomes

This assessment will cover these course learning outcomes:

- Understand the culture and ethos of volunteering in New Zealand, and the NZFS in particular.
- Understand how to effectively support the leadership of volunteers by recognising issues and opportunities, developing solutions and communicating effectively.

You will also be expected to demonstrate that you have understood and can apply appropriate themes and concepts from the course materials and discussions.

Assessment requirements

This activity is broken is broken into three tasks:

1. Research a need or problem.
2. Analyse your research results
3. Write recommendations.

You will develop a 1500–3000-word report to communicate your findings and recommendations to the brigade, region or the national service. (Not to exceed limit by more than 10%.)

The structure should be a business report; you should structure it in an appropriate way to clearly communicate your research and solutions. There is a sample report structure on page 6.

You might also find *Planning and Writing University Assignments: an Otago Study Guide* by Carol Hunter useful. This gives advice for creating written assignments, including business reports. It is available at http://media.otago.ac.nz/r73SjLdJm2/IWeFptVE/Planning_Writing_Assign.pdf.

You will need to reference any policies, procedures and external sources. Please use APA referencing style. For advice about APA, see *Referencing with APA: a quick guide* by Otago University's Robertson Library at <http://www.library.otago.ac.nz/robertson/pdf/APA%20referencing%20guide.pdf>.

Note: Your report should be clearly watermarked 'Assignment only, not for distribution'.

Submission of draft assessment

You may submit your draft assessment to your tutor for review and feedback related to the assessment criteria. To do this email the draft directly to the tutor.

Task 1

Research a need or problem

Begin by selecting and defining a need or problem then research the topic to develop and clarify options for solutions and recommendations.

To start:

- Read the *2011 Volunteer Sustainability Report* (see Appendix 1) and reflect on what you already know from your own experience and the key points made in the Report. Are there any needs or issues that particularly interest you?
- Collect primary data. You could, for example, interview or survey NZ Fire Brigade management, paid staff and volunteers. What are their needs and issues? What do they see as the causes? Do they see any solutions?
- Apply your own experience and knowledge.
- Use the course materials (including textbook and online resources).
- Use the Managing Volunteers course forum to gather and consolidate your ideas.

Note that you may need to broaden your research to include secondary sources (for example, books, articles, reports or publications) outside the course materials. Remember to keep a record of any policies, procedures and external sources –you will need to reference these in your report.

Include a brief summary of how you conduct your research. For example, you could write the answers to these questions:

- What is the scope of your research and analysis?
- What method / s did you use for your research?
- Were there any limitations to your research approach? How will these affect the results of your report?

Task 2

Analyse the results of your research

Based on your research, your analysis should clearly identify the need or issues and underlying causes. Explain what the need or problem is in terms of:

- general volunteer theory
- general management theory
- NZFS strategy, policies, procedures and culture
- data you have gathered.

Task 3

Write recommendations

Based on your research and analysis, make recommendations:

1. Propose a practical solution giving options where possible.
2. Outline the benefits and pitfalls that apply to each option.
3. Conclude with a recommendation.

Make sure it is clear from your report why your proposed solution is the best resolution to the need or problem.

SUBMITTING YOUR ASSESSMENT

- The due date and email address for assessment submission will be communicated to you by your tutor in Week 1 of the course.
- Before the due date you may submit a draft assessment to your tutor for feedback on your progress in relation to the Assessment Requirements. Clearly mark that version of your assessment 'Draft' in the header or footer of the document and email it directly to your tutor. Remember to leave yourself time to take in any suggested changes so you can resubmit the document as a final assessment before the due date.
- Completed assignments are to be emailed to your tutor before 5pm on the due date.

Sample report structure

This is an example structure for your report. Note that it is best to organise your report (and allocate your word count) to suit your information and message—you may need to adapt this structure.

TITLE AND DATE

Give your organisation name, your name, and your position.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Include sections, tables, reference list and Appendices.

INTRODUCTION

Introduce the report. Write about the reason for the report, and what you want the report to achieve. Briefly give an outline of the contents of the report. This should be around 5–10% of your word count.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

Briefly explain how you researched the need or problem. Discuss the limitations of this approach. This should be around 5% of your word count.

NEEDS OR PROBLEMS INVESTIGATED

Define the need or problem and give underlying causes. State the effects and implications. Explain what needs to change. This should be around 40% of your word count.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Give a practical solution or solutions, giving options where possible. Outline the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Justify your recommendations using relevant research, theory and principles where possible. This should be around 45% of your word count.

REFERENCE LIST

Use APA referencing style.

APPENDICES

Provide information (for example, data, tables, figures, interview notes, and so on) that is too large to fit into your report. Your appendices do not count toward your word count. Note: each Appendix should be directly related to your report, and should be referred to in the body of your report and in your Table of Contents.

Marking guide

Your assessor(s) will be looking for evidence in your report that you have met the requirements of the task. You will be graded either:

Does not meet requirements (Not yet competent)

Meets requirements (Competent)

or

Exceeds requirements.

What you will be assessed on	Assessment indicators		
	Does not meet requirements (Not yet competent)	Meets requirements (Competent)	Exceeds requirements
Demonstrating mastery of learning outcomes (see page 1 of this document)	Neither learning outcome is adequately addressed.	The report shows consistent understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the culture and ethos of volunteering in New Zealand, and in the NZFS in particular how to effectively support the leadership of volunteers by recognising issues and opportunities, developing solutions and communicating effectively. 	The report shows insightful and deep understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the culture and ethos of volunteering in New Zealand, and in the NZFS in particular how to effectively support the leadership of volunteers by recognising issues and opportunities, developing solutions and communicating effectively.
Strategic awareness	The report shows limited or no knowledge of NZFS strategic directions. Alternatively, the report may show knowledge of NZFS strategic directions, but this has not been applied effectively.	The report shows thorough knowledge of and NZFS strategic directions. Clear and logical links are made between the analysis and recommendations and NZFS strategic directions.	The report shows exceptional understanding of NZFS strategic directions and takes account of these in both analysis and recommendations.

<p>Research skills</p>	<p>Makes insufficient or inappropriate use of sources and data.</p>	<p>Appropriate and sufficient sources and methodologies have been used. These have been used to develop ideas and support arguments. Sources have been acknowledged and referenced appropriately.</p>	<p>Exceptional research and use of sources. Information and data has been collected and recorded using appropriate methodologies and referencing.</p>
<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Demonstrates little or no understanding or review of relevant concepts. Provides little or no connection with relevant theories, policies and / or the writer's own context and experience.</p>	<p>Clear and appropriate reflection on and interpretation of data. Key issues and implications are highlighted. Makes connections to general management theory, volunteer theory, NZFS policies, strategy and culture, and the writers' context, knowledge and experience.</p>	<p>Analysis is exceptional and innovative. Analysis and arguments are placed in context and are insightfully linked to relevant theories, policies and the writer's own context and experience.</p>
<p>Evaluation and discussion</p>	<p>Findings are limited and / or discussion is superficial. Provides little or no original insight, analysis or justification for views expressed. Alternatively, findings may be inconsistent with evidence supplied.</p>	<p>Makes well-supported, researched and sound arguments and judgments based on interpretation of the research. Resolves both concrete and abstract problems. Critically examines all key aspects of the need or problem and solution / s. Critically evaluates research and recommendations. The report, if it was submitted to NZFS management, would be of value.</p>	<p>Evidence of deep or exceptional knowledge of key concepts and problems or issues. Arguments and judgments are practical, innovative and exceptionally well supported. Shows exceptional awareness of implications of both the need or problem and the recommended solution / s. Demonstrates an anticipation of alternative perspectives and counter-arguments. Critical analysis of the research and recommendations is insightful. If it was submitted to NZFS management, the report would be of excellent, practical value.</p>

<p>Presentation</p>	<p>The report is lacking in any or all of these attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriate word count • communicates well • clear organisation and structure • appropriate referencing of sources. 	<p>The report demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriate word count • communicates well • consistently clear organisation and structure • appropriate referencing of sources. 	<p>The report demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriate word count • communicates exceptionally well –is very fluent, clear and persuasive • clear and professional formatting, organisation and structure • appropriate referencing of sources • appropriate terminology.
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New Zealand Fire Service 2011 Volunteer Sustainability Report

2011 Volunteer Sustainability Report

During 2010, the New Zealand Fire Service (NZFS) undertook an in-depth analysis of its volunteer workforce to identify a number of issues affecting their ability to sustain a volunteer workforce of around 8000 individuals across New Zealand. Sustainability remains an important focus for the Minister of Internal Affairs, as well as a key priority for the NZFS commission, and is also high on the agenda for the NZFS Senior Management Team.

The 2011 report provides information on volunteer data from the Human Resource Information System during the period of 2010/2011, and the findings of the 2011 volunteer survey and brigade workshops.

Date: April 2012

Sponsor: Janine Hearn, Human Resources Director

Business Owner: Simon George, Manager Organisational Development (Acting)

Author: Rachel de Haas, Organisational Development Advisor

Business Unit: Human Resources

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Human Resources Volunteer data

This section provides an overview of the current NZFS volunteer workforce. Data has been obtained from the NZFS Human Resources Information System for the 2010/2011 period. The data has been amended to reflect the region change from eight regions to five.

BRIGADE SUMMARY BY REGION - 30 June 2011						
REGION	Brigades	Volunteers	Avg % Compliment	Average Service	Operational	Support
REGION 1	63	1485	101.1%	9.7	85.8%	14.2%
REGION 2	74	1418	92.4%	10.3	86.0%	14.0%
REGION 3	99	1879	89.8%	11.0	87.0%	13.0%
REGION 4	86	1727	98.6%	10.8	93.6%	6.4%
REGION 5	72	1375	94.2%	12.7	92.1%	7.9%
NZFS AVERAGE	394	7884	94.8%	10.9	89.0%	11.0%

Figure 1: Brigade summary by region

- The NZFS has 394 volunteer brigades with a total of just under 8000 volunteers. The number of brigades is unchanged from the 2010 report.
- The average length of service of current volunteers is 10.9 years (10.8 in 2009/2010)
- 89% of NZFS volunteers are in operational roles and 11% are currently involved in operational support or brigade support roles, which is consistent with 2009/2010 data.

REGION % of Brigade Compliment- 30 June 2011									
REGION	30 - 39%	40 - 49%	50 - 59%	60 - 69%	70 - 79%	80 - 89%	90 - 99%	100% and over	Grand Total
REGION 1	0%	0%	2%	3%	6%	13%	21%	56%	100%
REGION 2	0%	1%	4%	14%	15%	22%	7%	38%	100%
REGION 3	1%	1%	3%	12%	11%	20%	13%	38%	100%
REGION 4	0%	2%	1%	6%	2%	9%	19%	60%	100%
REGION 5	0%	1%	6%	4%	11%	18%	24%	36%	100%
NZFS AVERAGE	0%	1%	3%	8%	9%	16%	16%	45%	100%

Figure 2: Portion of brigades per region as a percentage of approved compliment

Figure 2 provides a breakdown of brigades by current percentage of approved compliment for each region.

- 45% of total volunteer brigades are at 100% of compliment or over, down 2% on 2009/2010 figures. This means that over half of volunteer brigades remain under approved compliment
- 21% of brigades are at less than 80% of compliment which is consistent with 2009/2010 figures.
- 4 brigades are between 40 and 49% of compliment, and one brigade is between 30 and 39%.

Where a brigade is significantly below compliment, analysis should occur to determine whether the approved compliment is accurate, why the brigade is unable to achieve compliment and whether being below compliment is impacting on brigade performance.

Demographics

Consistent with 2010 figures, the majority of the NZFS volunteer workforce across all Regions are in the 30-39 and 40-49 age groups. The average age of a NZFS volunteer as at 30 June 2011 was 42.5, this has gradually increased over the last ten years from 39.3 in 2002.

The orange highlighted cells in figure 3 below indicate a downward trend in the percentage of NZFS volunteers in the 25 - 34 age bracket.

The pink highlighted cells in figure 3 indicate a growing trend in the percentage of NZFS volunteers aged 50+, and in particular, over 60.

Age Profile 01 July 2002 - 30 June 2011													
YEAR	< 19	20 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 34	35 - 39	40 - 44	45 - 49	50 - 54	55 - 59	60 - 64	65 <	Total	Avg Age
2002	4%	8%	11%	15%	15%	15%	12%	9%	6%	3%	1%	100%	39.3
2003	4%	7%	11%	15%	15%	16%	12%	9%	6%	3%	2%	100%	39.5
2004	4%	7%	9%	14%	15%	16%	12%	10%	7%	4%	2%	100%	40.5
2005	3%	7%	8%	13%	16%	16%	13%	10%	7%	4%	2%	100%	41.0
2006	3%	7%	7%	13%	16%	16%	14%	10%	7%	4%	3%	100%	41.4
2007	4%	7%	8%	11%	16%	16%	14%	10%	7%	5%	3%	100%	41.7
2008	3%	7%	8%	10%	16%	15%	14%	10%	7%	5%	3%	100%	42.0
2009	4%	7%	7%	10%	14%	16%	14%	10%	8%	5%	4%	100%	42.2
2010	4%	7%	7%	10%	14%	15%	14%	11%	8%	5%	4%	100%	42.4
2011	4%	7%	7%	10%	13%	15%	14%	11%	8%	5%	5%	100%	42.5
Total	4%	7%	8%	12%	15%	16%	14%	10%	7%	4%	3%	100%	41.4

Figure 3: Average age over a 10 year period by age range

The percentage of females in the NZFS workforce is 13% (12.2% in 2009/2010). The percentage of female volunteers has increased slowly over the last few years. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a number of factors may have contributed to this, including:

- The targeted attraction advertising to female members of the public
- Females perceptions of being a volunteer fire fighter have changed
- The culture within volunteer brigades has changed
- The different set of skills a female volunteer can bring to a brigade has increased in value

GENDER PROFILE - 30 June 2011					
REGION	Female count	Male count	Female %	Male %	Grand Total
REGION 1	197	1288	13%	87%	100%
REGION 2	221	1197	16%	84%	100%
REGION 3	266	1613	14%	86%	100%
REGION 4	182	1545	11%	89%	100%
REGION 5	124	1252	9%	91%	100%
NZFS Total	990	6895	13%	87%	100%

Figure 4: Gender summary by region

Chief Fire Officer (CFO) summary

- The average CFO age across the regions is 55.3 years (54.8 years in 2009/2010). This confirms a trend that was identified in the 2010 volunteer sustainability report, that our Volunteer Executive Officer workforce is ageing, thus, identifying and ensuring the readiness of successors must become a priority.
- The youngest CFO is 30.6, which is younger than in 2009/2010, and the table shows a number of young volunteer CFOs across NZ. This shows that there is confidence in the leadership abilities of these younger volunteers and this will assist in ensuring the sustainability of NZFS volunteers.
- The average length of service of a CFO is 9.8 years which is similar to 2009/2010 data.

CFO Age Profile - 30 June 2011				
REGION	Average Tenure as CFO	Average CFO Age	Youngest CFO	Oldest CFO
REGION 1	9.5	56.0	35.5	70.1
REGION 2	9.6	55.5	30.6	75.8
REGION 3	10.0	54.9	32.6	74.4
REGION 4	10.7	54.6	34.2	75.7
REGION 5	8.8	55.7	36.1	74.7
NZFS AVERAGE	9.8	55.3	33.8	74.1

Figure 5: Current Chief Fire Officer (CFO) age and tenure

Figure 6 shows the number CFOs leaving over the last 5 years, and the portion of these CFOs who are stepping down vs. permanently leaving the brigade.

- While there seems to be no logical trend, this data shows that there are a consistent number of CFOs who step down for the role, and this is fairly even with the number of CFO who permanently leave the brigade.
- While there was a peak of CFOs who stepped down, or permanently left their brigades in 2006/2007, there seem to an average of 20 CFOs that need to be replaced on an annual basis. This is equal to 5% of our CFO population.

Volunteer CFO Analysis 2005/06 to 2010/11						
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Number CFOs who stepped down	6	9	15	12	8	9
Average Tenure as CFO (Yrs) for those who stepped down	15.1	3.9	7.7	5.8	7.2	6.4
Number of CFOs permanent leavers	17	21	5	9	13	9
Average Tenure as CFO (Yrs) permanent leavers	10.2	9.7	7.6	6.9	13.3	9.1
Total number of CFOs stepping down / leaving in year	23	30	20	21	21	18

Figure 6: Proportion of CFOs stepping down vs. Permanently leaving the brigade

Turnover

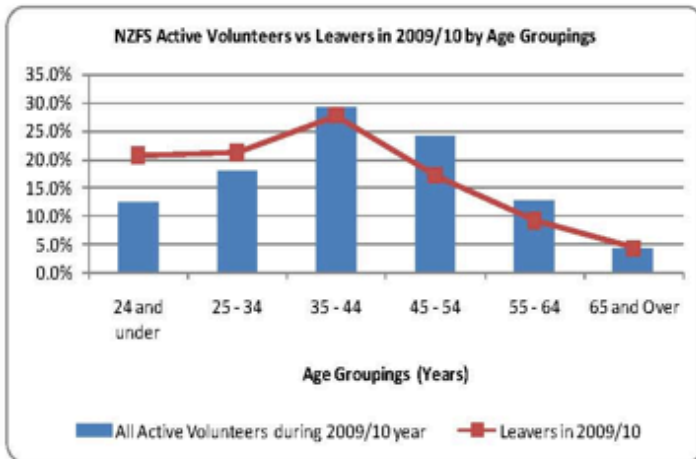


Figure 7: NZFS Active Volunteers vs. Leavers in 10/11 by Service

Turnover 2010-11

REGION	Total Volunteers	Total Leavers	Turnover
REGION 1	1485	206	13.9%
REGION 2	1418	139	9.8%
REGION 3	1879	203	10.8%
REGION 4	1727	135	7.8%
REGION 5	1376	112	8.1%
Grand Total	7885	795	10.1%

Figure 8: Turnover as of 30 June 2010

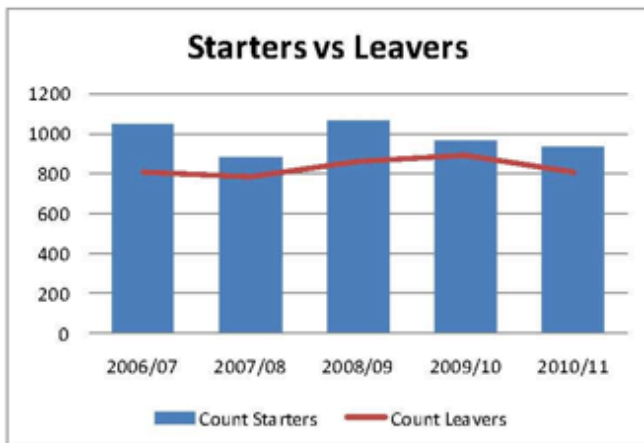


Figure 9: Trend of volunteers leaving vs. new volunteers recruited

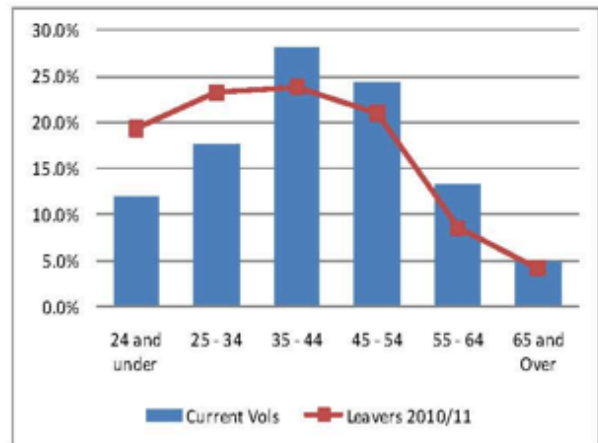


Figure 10: Leavers by age as a percentage of total volunteers

- The average annual turnover of all NZFS volunteers across regions was 10.1%. This is down slightly (0.6%) on last year.
- Although we have had a decrease in volunteer turnover, there still exists a disproportionate number of leavers with under five years of service. In addition to this people who have been able to commit to five years, typically then stay as long as they are able.
- The NZFS has continued to recruit more volunteers than have left, however as indicated earlier, the average brigade members across regions is still below compliment.
- There continues to be a disproportionate number of those aged under 34 leaving the volunteer workforce, compared to the total number of volunteers in this age group.

Volunteer survey summary

The 2011 Volunteer Survey follows on from the initial volunteer sustainability survey carried out in 2010. The majority of the survey questions are adapted from 2010 to identify trends across the volunteer workforce in the areas of attraction, retention, engagement, and utilisation. In addition, the survey focussed on two key areas of work currently underway: Communications and Leadership.

The responses totalled 1064, which is down on the 2010 completion rate of 1185. Reasons behind this may include that the 2011 survey was only offered online, rather than both online and print versions, as in 2010. In addition to this, individuals who completed the 2010 survey may have felt that they did not need to complete this year's survey. Despite this, of the 1064 responses, 471 were new survey respondents, i.e. they did not complete the 2010 volunteer survey.

Attraction

The most effective ways of attracting new members

The results of the 2011 volunteer survey remain consistent with those of 2010. The three most common ways that volunteers heard about volunteering with NZFS are (in order of priority)

- Through a friend or family member (43.3%)
- Invitation from the local brigade, or member (21.4%)
- Seeing the local brigade in action (18.9%)

Conversely, the biggest barriers to new volunteers joining are (in order of impact)

- Lack of awareness of what is involved in being a NZFS volunteer (20.0%)
- Not knowing anyone in the brigade (18.6%)

These findings demonstrate that face to face attraction methods are the most effective overall for attracting new volunteers into a brigade.

Reasons for Volunteering with the NZFS

Again, consistent with 2010 information, there are four key reasons for individuals joining the local volunteer Brigade (in order of priority)

- To serve their community (76.6%)
- To protect people and live in their community (60.7%)
- To meet new people and make new friends (51.2%)
- To develop skills (41.0%)

Summary

Survey results for attraction are consistent with the 2010 results. This consistency shows the effectiveness of these recruitment methods, and any new materials or strategies developed need to take advantage of these findings.

Engagement

The NZFS defines engagement as the relative strength of an individual's identification with, and involvement in, and loyalty to a particular organisation or job¹.

In the NZFS volunteer context, it is apparent during brigade visits, that engaged individuals are more likely to be actively involved in their brigades, attend as many incidents as they are able, support fire safety programmes and so on. Disengaged or even ambivalent individuals on the other hand, may not be as active and may lack the desire to attend incidents, fail to support specialist programmes and may generally have a negative impact on the morale of a brigade.

Current Engagement

When asked how likely they are to recommend the NZFS to others as a place to volunteer, 72.7% of respondents said they would definitely recommend NZFS as a place to volunteer. This suggests a high engagement in volunteering for the NZFS. In support of this, most other engagement related questions were rated very highly; in particular:

- 82.4% of respondents indicated they were always proud to tell others they were a part of the NZFS
- 74.6% of respondents indicated they always understood what is expected of them in their role
- 76.7% of respondents indicated they that they always go the extra mile to ensure the public receives excellent service from the NZFS

In terms of overall satisfaction, 49.8% indicated that they are always satisfied with their role, and 42.6% were mostly satisfied with their role at the NZFS. 81.7% of respondents indicated that their brigade mostly or always had a good relationship with career staff and 65.8% of respondents indicated that that Fire Service personnel appreciate that volunteers also have commitments in their paid work.

51.3% of respondents stated that they would volunteer as long as they were able, while 13.1% stated they intend to volunteer for at least another 10 years.

Through conferences and brigade workshops, we see that volunteers are more likely to be engaged in their immediate community and brigade, than the wider NZFS. This links with the 'Community' attribute of the Volunteer Value Proposition², that NZFS volunteers are engaged in protecting property and lives in their immediate or local community, for the benefit of their wider neighbourhood group, thus in turn also benefiting themselves and their family.

¹ NZFS All-Personnel Survey 2008

² NZFS Volunteer Value Proposition research was undertaken in 2011 and is explained in detail on page 14 of this report

Area Management and Volunteer Support

On a rating scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree, the following were found in relation to the perception of current Area Management and Volunteer support:

- 43.9% either agreed or strongly agreed that Area Management consults with the brigade. 23.3% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 59.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Area Managers treat volunteers with respect. 17.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 39.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Area Management ensures their brigade has sufficient resources. 24.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 37.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Area Management listened to their feedback. 26.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 66.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their VSO provides good support to the brigade, 15.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Volunteer Recognition

The five most highly valued forms of recognition are;

- 1) Annual Brigade grants (74.1%)
- 2) Reimbursement for loss of income (64.9%)
- 3) Positive feedback from members or manager (54.4%)
- 4) Annual health screening (48.2%)
- 5) Service medals and bars (47.6%)

The 2010 survey showed Long Service Medals and Bars as the second most valuable form of recognition. Positive feedback and health screening were additional items to this year's survey. With the addition of these two items, the results for 2011 show that Long service medals and bars are the fifth most valuable form of recognition overall.

As factors that are likely to enhance engagement, it is important the NZFS raises the memberships and benefits that are available to volunteers.

Summary

Engagement results from the survey suggest that overall, there are high levels of engagement with the NZFS. However, due to the response rate being 13.3%, we cannot say that this is entirely representative of all NZFS volunteers.

Utilisation

Utilisation refers to the extent to which the NZFS uses the volunteer workforce in an efficient and effective manner. When asked what would most negatively impact on their intentions to stay, the top three survey responses were:

- An increase in administration duties (68.3%)
- An increase in training time required (56.5%)
- An increase in time required for turnouts (25.6%)

Workshop feedback suggests that volunteers who spend more time responding to incidents are likely to be more engaged with their role as a NZFS volunteer and feel that their time is better utilised this way.

Distribution of volunteer time

- The majority of respondents spend 1-4 hours per week responding to incidents (80.6%)
- On average, respondents spent 1-4 hours per week training (86.5%)
- 75.3% of respondents spent 1-4 hours on other NZFS activities, not including incident or training.

Summary

The responses regarding what would impact on their continued service indicate that the amount of time they have to commit (or are utilised) to the NZFS has an impact on their continued service. The majority of respondents spend between 3 and 12 hours volunteering per week for the NZFS, however, there are also outliers that spend more than 8 hours on any one of these three activities.

The NZFS needs to continue to enhance the efficiency of volunteer time through process reviews and developing further tools to assist brigades in the amount of time they are required to carry out non-operational tasks.

Retention

Retention of the volunteer workforce is key to ensuring the sustainability of the NZFS. As indicated in the 2011 HR volunteer data, turnover has decreased by 0.6% in the last 12 months.

Pull Factors (why do NZFS volunteers stay?)

In 2010, when asked what they enjoy about being a volunteer with the NZFS, the following top factors were identified (NB: the assumption is made that the things an individual enjoys contributes strongly to their reason/s for continuing to volunteer with NZFS):

1. Opportunities for learning new skills (76.8%)
2. The social atmosphere of the brigade (75.3%)
3. Community appreciation of them as a volunteer (64.3%)
4. Opportunities for personal growth and development (63.7%)

In the 2011 survey, these factors remained largely the same:

1. Being part of NZ's most trusted profession (52.7%)
2. Community appreciation of them as a volunteer (51.3%)
3. The social atmosphere of the brigade (47.9%)
4. Opportunities for development (41.5%)

Push factors (why do NZFS volunteers leave?)

The 2010 Volunteer Sustainability Survey asked respondents what would impact on their continued service with the NZFS. The highest impact responses were (some or significant impact on continued service):

1. Poor leadership of the brigade (77.5%)
2. Family commitments (74.8%)
3. Conflicts and factions within the brigade (73.9%)
4. Moving out of the brigade area (72.9%)

While these four push factors featured again in the 2011 volunteer survey, the highest 2011 impact responses were (some or significant impact on continued service):

1. Bureaucracy / red tape (82.1%)
2. Family commitments (78.2%)
3. Poor leadership of the brigade (73.9%)
4. Poor brigade communications (71.6%)

Summary

Strategies need to be developed that mitigate or reduce the impact of factors that can be influenced by NZFS. Some of this may include facilitating brigade transfers as individuals move towns, enhancing leadership and internal health of individual brigades.

Communication

Communication between NHQ and volunteer brigades continues to be a challenge. In the 2011 volunteer survey, a section was focussed on communications to identify the best methods and mediums for communicating messages to volunteers, with the intention of ensuring the message is received, read, understood, and actioned (where required).

When asked, what are the most effective methods of communicating messages to you from national headquarters, the following two were rated the highest overall by respondents:

- Station / Brigade meetings (57.5%)
- Fire and Rescue Magazine (50.1%)

There were a number of other mediums rated high (over 40%). While not in the top three, these include:

- Through the Volunteer Support Officer
- FireNet
- Whole Country email
- Presentations/conferences
- K99

Those methods which were rated as the most ineffective were Fax and Facebook. While Facebook has its place in external and marketing-related communications in the NZFS, it is not an effective way of communicating national notices that are targeted at the whole volunteer workforce.

Feedback and input into National Initiatives

Respondents were asked if they felt that they could respond or provide feedback to messages they receive. 77.5% of respondents felt they could respond, and typically, they did this directly to the originator (77.1%), or through their CFO (54.6%).

Other ways that volunteers typically provided feedback were:

- Through their VSO (39.6%)
- Phone call to the originator (36.4%)
- Directly to Area Management (24.8%)

Use of the NZFS portal

91.7% of respondents were aware that they could access their NZFS email through the internet (portal) on any computer (i.e. not just NZFS computers). This is a very positive result, and shows that the portal is a useful tool for volunteers, however it also shows that promotion of this tool is still required to increase this to 100% of volunteers. Most respondents (36.8% checked their NZFS emails weekly, while 35.8% of respondents checked their NZFS emails daily.

While this looks positive, it also needs to be noted, that around 15% of the volunteer workforce completed the 2011 volunteer survey, which was only accessible online. It is clear that those who completed the online survey have access to and are comfortable using a computer. This is not necessarily the case for the remaining 85% of volunteers who did not complete this online survey.

In addition to this, feedback through conferences and workshops shows that a number of volunteers feel that they are sent too many emails on a weekly basis, and they cannot tell what is important from what is non-essential.

Summary

These findings provide NHQ with information on the most effective methods of communicating messages to volunteers. The results show that there are a number of mediums that are effective, depending on many factors, which may include the detail of the message, the audience, and the purpose.