

Volunteer Payments Project Overview

The problem/opportunity

Fire and Emergency New Zealand has a range of payment mechanisms to reimburse and support volunteers. These include reimbursements for expenses, allowances, event-based payments and some historical payment arrangements. These mechanisms are sometimes unclear for volunteers, while Fire and Emergency must ensure that payment arrangements remain appropriate, consistently applied and aligned with contemporary volunteering and organisational expectations. Therefore, a review of volunteer payment arrangements is required to improve clarity, consistency, and confidence in the system for both volunteers and the organisation.

Background and Context

The Volunteer Payments Project (VPP) was recently established in response to feedback gained through the Seeking Your Insights phase of the Volunteer Engagement Model project, which identified that the inconsistencies associated with individual legacy payment arrangements for volunteers needs to be addressed. The purpose of the VPP is to conduct a review of volunteer payment arrangements with the aim of improving clarity, consistency, and confidence in the system for both volunteers and Fire and Emergency.

Outcomes and benefits

The Volunteer Payments Project will establish a clear and future-focused approach to volunteer payments by reviewing existing arrangements and developing a more consistent, principle-based framework. The project will improve transparency and understanding of how payment types operate across the volunteer system, while ensuring alignment with Fire and Emergency's future operating model and Volunteer Engagement Model. This will support informed decision-making, long-term sustainability, and confidence in how volunteer payments are designed and administered.

Project Focus with the UFBA

The Volunteer Payments Project team has been meeting with District leaders and those who administer volunteer payments to understand how these arrangements work in practice and the impacts of managing them across the organisation.

We would now like to begin early engagement with volunteers through the UFBA Working Group to understand how these payments are experienced and understood from their perspectives. Hearing directly from volunteers is vital to ensure the project understands and reflects real experiences.

We are inviting interested volunteers to provide their input about volunteer payments. We would also like to hold small group discussions with nominated UFBA Working Group members, where we will share an overview of the project, outline what has been done so far, and listen to your experiences and views on the current payment arrangements.

This early engagement is intended to help inform the project and is not a replacement for formal, volunteer-wide consultation. All volunteers will have the opportunity to participate in consultation later in the project, before any decisions are made.

Project Scope

In scope

Volunteer Annual Reimbursement
Family / Whānau Support Allowance
Loss of Income
Volunteer Gratuities
Individual legacy payments
Long Duration Incident Payments

Project Governance

The project is sponsored by Janine Hearn, DCE People and Megan Stiffler, DCE Operational Response. The steering committee is made up by:

- Janine Hearn, DCE People
- Megan Stiffler, DCE Operational Response
- Julia Costa, UFBA Principal Advisor and Manager Strategic Programmes
- Sue Turnbull, National Manager Organisational Development
- Andrew Hart, Manager Remuneration and Benefits
- Ken Cooper, National Manager Response Capability
- David Utumapu, District Commander
- Blair Kiely, Chief Advisor to Service Delivery DCE's
- Janine Heathcote, Manager Financial Accounting