



# Volunteering Reinvented

Human Capital Solutions  
for the Nonprofit Sector

Prepared by the following organizations:

- American Cancer Society
- America's Promise
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of America
- Catholic Charities USA
- Case Foundation
- Corporation for National and Community Service
- Goodwill Industries
- Hands On Network
- National Human Services Assembly
- Points of Light Foundation
- United Way of America
- VolunteerMatch

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## Introduction

To grow and adapt in today's continuously changing society, a nonprofit organization must recognize the value and contribution of both its paid staff and volunteers. Simply recruiting large numbers of volunteers, however, does not necessarily translate into success for the nonprofit sector or the community at large. Successful results are achieved when an organization is able to support, mobilize, and manage its volunteer resources for the greatest possible impact on a problem or need.

In a competitive environment where resources are often scarce, nonprofit executives and boards of directors have become more strategic about how they leverage the various resources at their disposal: money, space, in-kind donations, equipment, technology, and employees. Unfortunately, however, one of the most powerful and plentiful resources of all – volunteers – continues to receive short shrift from nonprofit leadership.

This paper is intended to educate nonprofit executives about volunteering as a key human resource strategy, illustrate that volunteering is not just nice but necessary, and demonstrate the value volunteers bring to an organization that strategically plans for how to use them both to support infrastructure and to deliver programs and services.

## 21st Century Nonprofit Challenges

During the past century, America's nonprofit sector has grown significantly. Endeavors once initiated by well-intentioned individuals or small groups of volunteers

have matured into sophisticated organizations requiring strategic leadership and professional skill sets in marketing, public relations, policy development, technology planning, and more. With growth, nonprofits have been able to reach more people and communities with vital services that improve the quality of life in America. At the same time, a mature sector now faces a myriad of challenges:

- **Workforce Development:** As Baby Boomers retire, the nonprofit sector will lose more than 50 percent of its current leadership. Without finding new, flexible ways to keep Boomers involved, attract new professionals to nonprofit jobs, or cultivate a new crop of leaders from current employees, established nonprofits will find themselves facing a staffing shortage.

- **Infrastructure Costs:** Nonprofits rely heavily on government or foundations for their revenue. These grants are usually restricted with limited support for overhead costs such as administration or infrastructure investments. The financial fragility of large and small nonprofits alike restricts their ability to plan and manage for long-term effectiveness.

- **Diversity and Inclusion:** The changing face of America requires nonprofits to develop new cultural competencies. For example, as the Hispanic American population grows, many nonprofit groups find themselves struggling with how to ensure their accessibility and relevance to this new, diverse community.

- **Social Relevance:** Some take the relevance issue one step further. Have nonprofits lost touch with the most important issues facing the communities they serve? As nonprofits grow and professionalize, do they become less flexible and capable of responding to the rapidly changing needs of 21st century communities? Are their original missions obsolete? Have their primary stakeholders morphed into funders and policymakers instead of the people they were created to serve?



## The Sectors' Volunteer Origins

In 1913, 15 physicians and business leaders in New York City got together to raise awareness about the feared and unmentionable disease: cancer. With chartered divisions throughout the country, over 3,400 local offices, and over 3 million volunteers, today the American Cancer Society is committed to fighting cancer through research, education, patient service, advocacy, and rehabilitation.

In 1887, a Denver priest, two ministers and a rabbi recognized the need for cooperative action to address their city's welfare problems. Today, United Way of America comprises 1,300 local United Way agencies working to improve lives and mobilize the caring power of communities.

In 1902, Rev. Edgar J. Helms began collecting used household goods and clothing in wealthier areas of Boston and training and hiring those who were poor to mend and repair the used goods. Last year, with a combined budget of more than \$2 billion, Goodwill Industries collectively provided employment and training services to more than 846,000 individuals.

## Volunteers: The Nonprofit Sector Pipeline

One solution for all of these challenges can be found by revisiting the roots of the nonprofit sector: volunteers. Volunteers are first and foremost concerned people who see a need and decide to do something about it.

Today, more than 61 million Americans, or 27 percent, volunteer through nonprofit organizations with another 5 million finding ways to help outside any formal group.<sup>1</sup> Four in five charities use volunteers. However, only 1 in 4 charities effectively manages its volunteer resources.<sup>2</sup> And, most charities don't adequately plan for or staff their use of volunteers.

Whereas fundraising and development have become critical strategies for nonprofits, volunteers too often are seen by nonprofit executives as nice but not necessary to achieving their missions. Nonprofits may have "a volunteer program," rather than incorporate volunteers throughout their enterprise, in part because volunteers are seen as more work than they are worth – it takes time to recruit them and it is even harder to keep them.

The report *2007 Volunteering in America: State Trends and Rankings in Civic Life* indicates that approximately 20 million people who volunteered in 2005 didn't volunteer in 2006. That is a loss of approximately \$50 billion dollars worth of labor to the nonprofit sector (using Independent Sector's valuation of \$18.77 for the

*Of the more than 14 million full-time nonprofit workers in America, more than 4 million are unpaid volunteers.*

— Johns Hopkins University  
Nonprofit Employment Project

<sup>1</sup> *Volunteering in America: 2007 State Trends and Rankings in Civic Life*

<sup>2</sup> *Volunteer Management Capacity Study, 2003*

value of the average volunteer hour). While the reasons vary, one significant factor is volunteer satisfaction. Satisfaction may be defined as the gap between expectations and reality. The expectations of today's volunteers have changed. In addition to expecting a well-managed volunteer program and effective communications with staff, today's volunteers – just like paid employees – need to clearly see how their contributions result in a positive, measurable difference in someone's life. They need to see the "mission return" for their volunteer time investment. If they don't see it, they are more likely to leave.

## From Nice to Necessary: Rediscovering the Value of the Volunteer

Volunteers bring tremendous value to nonprofits that plan for and manage them effectively.

**Effectively managed volunteers save money and can be highly effective fundraisers.** In 2006, volunteers contributed more than \$150 billion worth of hours of service to communities. Three out of four nonprofits use volunteers to fundraise, and many volunteers also donate money to the organizations with which they serve.<sup>3</sup> And by donating just a few days of pro bono services each year, volunteers with professional skill sets can save nonprofits thousands of dollars.

**Volunteers are conduits to the community at large.** Volunteers are parents, neighbors, company employees, congregation members, donors, community leaders, and

the beneficiaries of nonprofit services. Regardless of race, income, or education, they offer networks and insights of tremendous value to your organization. They can be spokespeople, community focus groups, or liaisons to other organizations with which they volunteer or work.

**Volunteers can lighten staff workload and improve employee satisfaction.** With front-end planning and supervision, volunteers can expand the capacity of paid staff and enable them to focus on the most critical priorities and tasks. Volunteers bring enthusiasm and creativity that lend themselves to positive employee morale. Moreover, volunteers often build personal and professional relationships with staff that broaden opportunities and networks for both sides of the partnership, sometimes forming friendships that last a lifetime.

### Volunteers' Demonstrable Impact:

*Public/Private Ventures researchers found that after 18 months of spending time with their volunteer mentors, youth mentored through **Big Brothers Big Sisters of America** were 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs; 27% less likely to begin using alcohol; 52% less likely to skip school; 37% less likely to skip a class; more confident of their performance in schoolwork; one-third less likely to hit someone; and getting along better with their families.*

### Some work is best performed by volunteers.

Volunteers may know a community's assets, key players, and underlying challenges better than any paid staff person at a given nonprofit. They may have the skills, expertise, and community connections that would take

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.charityfundraising.org/Hager%20et%20al%20-%20Fundraising%20in%20the%20US.pdf>

years of experience for a staff person to gain. They often come with the built in credibility and trust that opens doors in the community, which is priceless to an organization. And, some community problems require volunteers as part of a solution. Neighborhood watch programs, one-on-one mentoring matches, parent-teacher associations, little leagues, and scouting troops would simply cease to exist without volunteers.

The benefit of volunteer engagement is in direct proportion to an organization's investment in volunteer management. Volunteer management entails costs in attraction, development, and retention of volunteers, and in the capacity building of staff (and sometimes volunteers) to manage volunteer resources. In short, volunteers are not free.

Imagine, however, if the nonprofit sector considered human capital planning and management as important as fundraising and development. Given that currently only 27 percent of Americans volunteer, the untapped

73 percent represent a huge resource with enormous potential to increase the nonprofit sector's human resource capacity and revenues; develop new innovative partnerships and collaborations; increase public support; and achieve demonstrable positive outcomes for our most at-risk communities.

## A Blueprint for Increasing the Return on Investment on Volunteers

In order to reap the greatest potential from volunteers, there are eight steps or functions that nonprofits should



successfully complete:

1. Market Research and Community Needs Assessments
2. Strategic Planning to Maximize Volunteer Impact
3. Recruiting and Marketing to Prospective Volunteers
4. Interviewing, Screening, and Selecting Volunteers
5. Orienting and Training Volunteers
6. Ongoing Supervision and Management
7. Recognition and Volunteer Development
8. Measuring Outcomes and Evaluating the Process

For related resources on effective volunteer management practices, visit [www.nationalservice.gov/resources](http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources).

Within this "volunteer value chain," some of the steps or functions are crucial for individual nonprofits to manage and implement on their own. For other functions, nonprofit leaders should consider finding outside support from local or national organizations that specialize in providing training, technical assistance, consulting, or technology tools to support volunteer management.

## The Missing Link: Strategic Planning to Maximize Volunteer Impact

The most critical and yet neglected step in the value chain, strategic planning around volunteering must take place within the overall context of human capital

planning and analysis. Board members and executive directors need to examine how to most effectively use volunteers to increase their organizations' capacity and achieve the desired outcomes for the individuals, families, or communities served. This process begins with a human capital analysis to address the following types of questions:

- What are essential job functions required to achieve the organization's goals?
- What positions currently exist to perform that function? How much time is required to perform each function?

### Job Functions for Exploration:

- Board/Leadership;
- Strategic Partnerships;
- Fundraising and Development;
- Organizational Development and Training;
- Marketing and Communications;
- Financial Management and Accounting;
- Technology and Information Systems;
- Legal Counsel;
- Administrative Support; and
- Program and Service Delivery.

- Which functions could be supported by volunteers? Of these, where could volunteers make the greatest impact? Where is a full-time, 40-hour-a week, paid staff person required?

- Are there pro bono services that professional volunteers could provide in one or more of the above areas that would enable a nonprofit to repurpose salaries or consultant fees?

- Is there an opportunity to develop virtual or off-site project-based work that can be assigned to a volunteer or group of volunteers that requires little day-to-day supervision on the part of staff?

- Is there an opportunity to share or borrow volunteers from other organizations?

Once a nonprofit redefines the volunteer opportunities within the organization, the organization must identify any system changes required to implement its new “volunteer inclusive” human resource strategy. Questions to address include:

- Does the organization have the right structure in place to implement the plan?

- Do existing staff members have the skills and expertise to execute a volunteer strategy?

- If so, how much capacity does the current staff have to take on this work?

- Can current management systems (e.g. technology, performance measurement, financial) be changed or improved to support your volunteer work more effectively? For example, how will the impact of volunteers be measured and communicated?

- What human resource practices, policies, and procedures (such as recruiting, orientation, training, and evaluation) should be initiated or changed to manage a volunteer strategy?

Organizations that undergo this type of strategic analysis of their human capital needs and volunteer opportunities will be more informed about where and how to invest their resources along the volunteer value chain.

## Measuring the Return on Investment

Measuring the total impact of volunteering requires an understanding of the various stakeholders: the volunteer, the charity, and the individuals and communities being served. Adapted from the United Kingdom’s Institute for Volunteering Research<sup>4</sup>, below are several economic formulas for measuring the return on investment in volunteers:

- **Total Volunteer Investment:** For a given fiscal year, a nonprofit should add up all expenditures related to the use of volunteers.

- **Total Volunteer Value:** If a nonprofit didn’t use volunteers, what would it have to pay someone to perform a particular volunteer function? 1) For each volunteer function, a nonprofit should estimate the hourly wage rate. The Points of Light Foundation’s economic impact calculator at <http://www.pointsoflight.org/resources/research/calculator.cfm> can identify the hourly wage rate for various labor categories. Nonprofits may also choose to use existing wage rates within their organizations or the widely accepted Independent Sector valuation of \$18.77 per average volunteer hour. 2) After determining the relevant wage, the organization should multiply the market wage per hour by the number of hours the volunteer donates within a given year to calculate individual volunteer value. 3) To formulate the total volunteer value to an organization, it should then add together the total volunteer value for all volunteers.

- **Volunteer Investment Ratio:** An organization should divide the total volunteer value by the total volunteer investment to determine the return on

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ivr.org>

investment for every \$1 spent in executing its volunteer management strategy.

In addition to these investment metrics, an organization should consider the following types of measures:

- **Financial Impact:** How much money did volunteers help fundraise in a given year?

- **Community Impact:** As a result of volunteers, how many individuals were served (whether directly or indirectly) and to what benefit?

- **Cost-Savings:** What are the short-term and long-term savings to the community because of the interventions implemented by volunteers?

- **Community Social Return on Investment (SROI):**

This type of analysis gives nonprofit organizations an additional avenue for measuring their value to communities. The calculation requires an organization to: 1) examine a service activity over a given time frame (usually five to 10 years); 2) calculate the costs required to support that activity and analyze the capital structures in place to support the activity; 3) identify the various cost savings, reductions in spending, and related benefits that accrue as a result of the activity; and 4) monetize those cost savings and related benefits.<sup>5</sup>

Communicating outcomes is as important as measuring them because volunteers are anxious to see tangible results from their efforts. Whether a volunteer is indirectly contributing by expanding the capacity of a charity or mentoring a child or working with a client on a one-on-one basis, they need to see both how they fit into the bigger picture and why their investment in your organization matters. The personal line-of-sight from the individual volunteer to the larger organizational mission is key.

<sup>5</sup> <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/1957.html>

## Conclusion

Volunteers make up a powerful force — one with the potential to make America a better place by creating healthier, happier, and more connected communities. They are not just nice but a necessary part of the solutions to today’s most pressing societal challenges — from school dropout rates and illiteracy to prisoner reentry and disaster response. However, volunteers have their own expectations and needs that must be met. For nonprofit executives, there is both a challenge and opportunity to meet these expectations by creating flexible and strategic opportunities for volunteers. As a sector, we must spend time understanding and

*“Volunteers, we know, have to get more satisfaction from their work than paid employees, precisely because they do not get a paycheck. They need, above all, challenge. They need to know the organization’s mission and to believe in it. They need continuous training. They need to see results.”*

— Peter Drucker,  
*Management Challenges for the 21st Century*

planning for the unique needs and styles of today’s volunteers in order to ensure personal satisfaction for the individual and a social return on investment for the nonprofit sector. ■



## Case Studies: Human Capital Solutions for the Nonprofit Sector



# Case 1:

## Engaging Low-Income Communities in Volunteering

### STEPS IN FOCUS:

1. Market Research and Community Needs Assessments
2. Strategic Planning to Maximize Volunteer Impact
3. Recruiting and Marketing to Prospective Volunteers
4. Interviewing, Screening, and Selecting Volunteers
5. Orienting and Training Volunteers
6. Ongoing Supervision and Management
7. Recognition and Volunteer Development
8. Measuring Outcomes and Evaluating the Process

Strong communities are made up of engaged residents who are at the center of efforts to address critical community issues. Through the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Neighboring Initiative of the Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network is focused on mobilizing the time, talent, and resources of marginalized residents to strengthen families and transform communities into thriving and vital places to live. In low-income, marginalized communities, residents are the experts of their own life experiences and can be agents of change.

Neighboring begins with the premise that the most effective way to achieve sustainable change in a given community is to engage the residents in a meaningful way. Neighboring is not a program, or a project — it is simply good volunteer practice. Neighboring acknowledges that all people have something to contribute to the improvement of their community. When agencies engage low-income residents as partners, and not just serve them as clients, volunteering has the power to build essential connections that low-income, underserved families and communities need to be successful. These include connections to economic opportunities, access to reliable services and supportive social networks made up of caring neighbors.

One of the communities that Volunteer! Baton Rouge (VBR!) serves is one of the poorest areas in the city. The community is mainly low-income, single-parent and African American; of the local schools available, 80% participate in Title I (a federal funding program for disadvantaged school districts) and 99% of students receive free or reduced-price lunch. Even though nearly a quarter of Baton Rouge's residents (and 18 percent of its families) live below the poverty line, VBR! wasn't sure how to best engage the low-income population in volunteer service.

In 2004, however, they held the Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network's Essential Strategies for Partnering with Volunteers in Low-Income Communities training for nearly 50 local

agencies, and met up with one — HOPE Ministries — that seemed to connect with the program's ideals. "They just really got it," said Janet Pace, former president & CEO of VBR! HOPE Ministries' programs served low-income citizens with a client-choice food pantry and a mentoring program, but had difficulty attracting volunteers because of their location within this poor community.

## The Solution

Both VBR! and HOPE Ministries had something to offer each other. They just had to figure out how to mesh their programming — to create opportunities for low-income citizens of Baton Rouge to both serve and receive services.

Through their efforts, each organization would gain valuable tools from one another. HOPE Ministries would learn how to strengthen their fledgling volunteer efforts and VBR! would be able to engage low-income communities for the first time.

## How They Did It

HOPE Ministries had been working on their own volunteering program, but Pace saw how VBR! could lend expertise. She began working with them on public relations, as well as creating a formal system for engaging volunteers. Their first project together was a marketing brochure; they quickly progressed to putting together a volunteer council from within the community to provide an insider's perspective on the programming.

With the help of VBR!, HOPE Ministries began holding quarterly open houses where they provided information

on both volunteering and how to work towards financial solvency. "That success," said Pace, "led us to open a satellite office."

After seeing HOPE Ministries' success in engaging low-income community members, Pace realized that it took more than the right technique to reach out to impoverished communities. It took an organization that community members could relate to.

If the methods they had been using were sound, Pace reasoned, then perhaps VBR!'s inability to reach out to low-income communities wasn't a technical flaw. She realized that the communities' perception of Volunteer! Baton Rouge was unclear — without meaning to, they'd portrayed themselves not as a resource where residents of low-income neighborhoods could serve as volunteers, but as an organization that sent help to those "needy" areas.

Pace applied for an AmeriCorps\*VISTA project, and brought on Andrea Warner as part of the Points of Light Foundation's Strengthening Communities Grant, and put her in charge of the new office. Now, VBR!'s satellite office, based in a community center which serves as the hub of the community and coordinated only by one AmeriCorps\*VISTA, engages an entirely new population than the original office ever could.

Andrea worked to engage faith-based organizations and neighborhood associations in the area — over 35 nonprofits and 50 churches — and began to create links between them, running through the central hub of Neighboring, VBR! and 1-800-Volunteer.

Faced with a daunting task — how to rejuvenate her entire organization's image in a community — Pace realized that a satellite office in the heart of a low-income neighborhood might give the Volunteer Center a fresh face. It could also, she knew, help encourage men, women and children from those neighborhoods to



become volunteers with VBRI! And in partnership with Pace's incredibly motivated VISTA, Warner's VBRI! satellite office became a strong, effective resource for Baton Rouge's low-income neighborhoods. "I'm about access, and making things open to the community. I have a strong heart for expanding into unreached communities, and I thought a satellite office would be a great way to do that," said Pace.

## Lessons Learned

■ When working with new communities, it's not just a nonprofit's programs that may need tweaking it's the way it approach the community members themselves. Nonprofits should ensure they approach community members with dignity and respect, and view them as volunteers instead of clients.

■ Nonprofits should consider bringing on a new staff member to lend a fresh perspective on outreach programs. Pace's application for a VISTA project provided her with a new full-time volunteer at little cost to Volunteer! Baton Rouge, one who could make an impact on an underserved community.

■ Nonprofits should reach out to organizations that already have a link to the communities they wish to engage. HOPE Ministries' client base mirrored the kinds of volunteers that Pace wanted to bring into VBRI's programming, making outreach that much easier. ■

*Family volunteering is an emerging strategy for strengthening low-income families with children. Participating together in community service enables parents and children to develop close relationships, learn together, and improve their neighborhoods. To learn more about this practice, visit the National Human Services Assembly website at <http://www.nassembly.org/fspc/practice/documents/Brief17.pdf>*

## Case 2: Volunteer Leaders

### STEPS IN FOCUS:

1. Market Research and Community Needs Assessments
- ✓ 2. Strategic Planning to Maximize Volunteer Impact
3. Recruiting and Marketing to Prospective Volunteers
4. Interviewing, Screening, and Selecting Volunteers
- ✓ 5. Orienting and Training Volunteers
- ✓ 6. Ongoing Supervision and Management
- ✓ 7. Recognition and Volunteer Development
- ✓ 8. Measuring Outcomes and Evaluating the Process

Hands On Network brings people together to strengthen communities through meaningful volunteer action. A hallmark of what enables Hands On affiliates to add breadth to their impact in communities is their strategic approach to training volunteers to lead, implement, and manage projects that occur every day of the week in partnership with other community-based organizations, schools, and public agencies.

Rather than relying on a professional volunteer coordinator or other staff person to be present at the time of the volunteer activity, a trained "volunteer leader" is charged with managing the project, communicating the tasks to the volunteers, and

representing the agency's thanks and appreciation at its conclusion. These volunteer leaders serve the added benefit of becoming recruiters of other volunteers and advocates of the organization's mission in the community.

As practiced in the Hands On model, the volunteer leader role fulfills a variety of functions for their host agency:

**1. Project Developer:** Volunteer leaders can work with the staff of the agency to identify specific projects that might be appropriate for volunteers.

**2. Project/Team Leader:** At the time of the project, the volunteer leader is responsible for orienting volunteers to the task or tasks to be completed; troubleshooting and answering questions from volunteers over the duration of the project; and ensuring the tasks are completed safely while achieving the objectives.

**3. Impact Evaluator:** Volunteer leaders can do the mundane work of administration and data collection (such as volunteer sign-in information, waiver forms, volunteer hours, etc.) as well as some of the higher-order impact assessments of the projects such as chronicling what was accomplished and the effect it had on the agency and/or the community.

**4. Agency Representative:** Volunteer leaders play the critical, yet oftentimes overlooked, role of enthusiastically welcoming volunteers into an agency and thanking them for their time and efforts.



**5. Issue Expert and Advocate:** As the volunteer leader gains experience in leading their projects, they become better informed about their host agencies' missions, the statistics and facts of the issue, and the complexity of the issue as it is manifested in their own community. This evolving expertise can lead to volunteer leaders becoming advocates and change agents in other aspects of their lives, including outspoken supporters of their host agencies, if the pathways are provided to them.

**6. Volunteer Recruiter:** Volunteer leaders are given a unique opportunity to become invested in their host agency or cause as a result of the leadership role they have been given. Naturally, these leaders will be active promoters and recruiters of other volunteers.

The Hands-On model could be described as “out-sourced volunteer management.” In their local communities, affiliates partner with other nonprofits, schools, and community-based organizations with a social service mission to identify ways that volunteers can support those missions, and carrying out the recruitment and management of volunteers on behalf of those agencies. Hands On affiliates use a strategy of well-defined projects in which groups or individual volunteers may engage. These projects may be one-time event-style opportunities, or ongoing service activities that happen with monthly, weekly or even daily frequency.

Every project is led by a volunteer leader, trained and placed with the host agency by the Hands On affiliate. Basic training for every volunteer leader includes:

- How to provide an orientation;
- Project site safety;
- Service-learning and reflection;
- Diversity and inclusion;

- Troubleshooting common challenges; and
- Volunteer recognition.

These trainings might be supplemented by their host agency for specific skills required for the role and to develop the leader's knowledge of the issue or cause in which the agency works. Additionally, the Hands On affiliate may host “in service” trainings for its corps of volunteer leaders to continue to enhance their leadership skills and as an approach to volunteer retention.

While every project, including ongoing/recurring projects, will have a volunteer leader present, the time commitment can vary depending on the availability of the Leader.

## Variations on the Role and a Pathway to Other Leadership

As a way of developing a pipeline for volunteer leaders, Hands On affiliates oftentimes offer a range of leadership opportunities varying on a scale of sophistication and commitment levels. For example, large-scale, community-wide Days of Service might allow for task leaders on the day of the event supported by a higher-level project leader who is responsible for the pre-event service project development and community-based promotion and recruitment. Finally, many times prospective board members are recruited from volunteer leader pools. Other creative leadership opportunities may be made available for experienced volunteer leaders on a pathway toward board participation, such as ad hoc committees, community-wide marketing campaigns, etc.

Volunteer leadership remains a vast untapped resource for nonprofits not only to expand capacity for service and volunteering but also to provide a strategy for addressing the retention challenge facing volunteer managers. A coordinated campaign among the nonprofit sector to design leadership roles for volunteers holds the promise to “raise the bar” on citizen involvement in communities and dramatically expand the sector's ability to engage volunteers more effectively. In addition, these leadership roles, if properly supported, cultivate the consciousness, capabilities, and commitment in volunteers, and create lifelong advocates for causes and the change that citizens seek to make in their communities. ■



# Case 3:

## AmeriCorps Members as Volunteer Multipliers

### STEPS IN FOCUS:

1. Market Research and Community Needs Assessments
2. Strategic Planning to Maximize Volunteer Impact
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7. Recognition and Volunteer Development
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Overall, Hands On Network’s national direct Citizen Action AmeriCorps program operates in 20 communities through its affiliate network and deploys 147 full-time members each year. The service activities of these members are consistent across the program, implementing and expanding upon the Hands On model for volunteer engagement, which includes two central components:

**1. Project Management:** The Hands-On model could be described as “out-sourced volunteer management.” Affiliates use a strategy of well-defined projects in which groups or individual volunteers may engage. These projects may be one-time event-style opportunities, or ongoing service activities that happen with monthly, weekly or even daily frequency. AmeriCorps members design and “spec out” these projects, bringing creative ideas for how the human capital of volunteers can support the agencies’ mission delivery.

**2. Volunteer Leadership:** A hallmark of what enables Hands On affiliates to add breadth to their impact in communities is their strategic approach to training volunteers to lead, implement, and manage projects that occur every day of the week. Rather than relying on a professional volunteer coordinator or other staff person to be present at the time of the volunteer activity, a trained “volunteer leader” is charged with managing the project, communicating the tasks to the volunteers, and representing the agency’s thanks and appreciation at the conclusion. These volunteer leaders serve the added benefit of becoming recruiters of other

Hands On Network’s Citizen Action AmeriCorps program is a cutting edge model for deploying full-time National Service members as capacity-building resources to enable community-based nonprofit organizations to improve their engagement of volunteers. In many cases, organizations are starting from scratch in their engagement of volunteers so the support of an AmeriCorps member results in a dramatic transformation of that nonprofit organization—going from only episodic engagement of ad hoc volunteers to a robust and recurring program of volunteer support of the agency’s program delivery.

volunteers and advocates of the organization’s mission in the community. AmeriCorps members recruit, train, and coach these volunteer leaders in an ongoing way—truly representing a multiplier effect. In the last year alone, Hands On Citizen Action AmeriCorps members have managed more than 30,000 volunteers and from these volunteers trained more than 4,000 as “volunteer leaders”.

Hands On Network’s affiliate in Phoenix, Arizona—Make A Difference—is an example of how this approach works. Make A Difference manages a program of 35 full-time members each year. Twenty-eight of these members are placed as embedded volunteer management experts in small, community-based nonprofit organizations throughout the city. The remaining seven of these members support a portfolio of nonprofits from the “home base” of the Make A Difference headquarters, usually handling issue-specific projects, such as environment and conservation, children and education, etc.

## What About It Works

■ A low-cost, well-trained, and centrally-supported full-time volunteer management expert embedded in the community-based nonprofit organization to focus 100% time on volunteer engagement. Hosting organizations are asked only to support the non-federal share of the AmeriCorps members’ stipend and health insurance costs, which totals about \$7,500. Often, these positions expand the staff team of these nonprofits by 30%.

■ A central hub of long-standing expertise to leverage in Make A Difference, as well as the resource of a turn-key technology system to manage volunteer projects and recruit in the community.

■ A team format for continued best practice sharing and ongoing trouble-shooting. Make A Difference convenes the AmeriCorps team for in-service training at least every two weeks. Additionally, the team works together to organize and lead major “days of service” events which provide real-time, hands-on experience in project management that can be applied to their day-to-day responsibilities.

■ A growing human resource network for spreading volunteer management practices throughout the community. Many of Make a Difference’s AmeriCorps members go on to full-time employment with their host agencies or continue to work in other nonprofits in the community.

AmeriCorps National Service holds promise to be a critical resource for realizing the goal of bringing more citizens to service. Indeed, the more that AmeriCorps members are given the opportunity, capability, and responsibility to be out in front of communities in this role, the more the true purpose of AmeriCorps is realized -- being the leaders of our communities efforts to address our shared concerns. AmeriCorps within Hands On Network has been an invaluable tool in building our internal and agency partners’ capacities to engage community volunteers. And those volunteers are experiencing the leadership and force-multiplier potential under those members’ guidance. ■



# Case 4:

## Providing a Pro Bono Solution

### STEPS IN FOCUS:

1. Market Research and Community Needs Assessments
2. Strategic Planning to Maximize Volunteer Impact
3. Recruiting and Marketing to Prospective Volunteers
4. Interviewing, Screening, and Selecting Volunteers
5. Orienting and Training Volunteers
6. Ongoing Supervision and Management
7. Recognition and Volunteer Development
8. Measuring Outcomes and Evaluating the Process

- Scoped projects with clear timelines;
- Pre-defined volunteer roles;
- Flexible project model that accommodates your work schedules; and
- Project management support throughout each pro bono project.

The volunteers in turn provide their nonprofit client with pro bono services by donating 3-5 hours per week for a six month project. Volunteers participate in 30-minute weekly conference calls with project teams and attend one in-person meeting per month with the nonprofit client.

Rather than creating hundreds of individual custom projects on a need by need basis, the Taproot Foundation identifies projects that address the challenges of most nonprofits, and develops general processes for meeting those needs. As a result, standardized project plans, methodologies, volunteer staffing models, and tools have been created that volunteer teams and their nonprofit clients can put to use to create their customized strategy and deliverables that best addresses the organization's needs.

To help overcome the cultural challenges that often exist when the for-profit and nonprofit sectors work together, Taproot's nonprofit clients and volunteer teams both receive basic training prior to starting a project. This training includes an introduction to the methodology, an overview of working with consultants, and a framework for communicating across sectors.

Historically, pro bono work has been inconsistent and unreliable in supporting the nonprofit sector. The Taproot Foundation has solved this problem by creating a model that can reliably deliver high-quality pro bono services and a great volunteer experience.

The Taproot Foundation serves as a broker for nonprofits and volunteers with specialized skills.

Taproot provides professional volunteers with:

- Carefully screened nonprofit clients;
- Excellent teammates with the right skills;

Each volunteer team is led by a volunteer project manager with professional project management experience. In addition, the project receives high-level oversight from a volunteer account director, who reviews all deliverables for quality, coaches the volunteer team to ensure the desired outcome, is available to assist the nonprofit client with key decisions, and directly intervenes if there are problems. Finally, a member of the Taproot Foundation staff is assigned to each project to support the volunteer team and nonprofit client.

For each pro bono service, the Taproot Foundation provides a detailed project manual, called a blueprint, that includes a project plan, task lists, division of responsibilities, communications plan, meeting agendas and other crucial tools. Each blueprint also includes advice and project-specific templates that were developed based on Taproot's prior experience and the counsel of executives at leading consulting agencies.

The Taproot Foundation's more than 3,000 volunteers have donated more than \$21 million in pro bono services. As a result, more than 520 nonprofits are better equipped to serve 19 million Americans in need.

## Donor Management and the San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center

The San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center (SFCAPC) is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect, the promotion of healthy families and the mental health of children. With direct crisis and

intervention programs designed to reduce parental stress, enhance parenting skills and provide comprehensive services for families in need, SFCAPC provides open-ended support and helps families break the cycle of violence. As one of the most comprehensive services providers in San Francisco, SFCAPC also provides education, training programs and public advocacy for child abuse prevention.

SFCAPC's limited technology infrastructure could no longer support the organization's needs and was having a noticeable impact on staff productivity. There were occasions when SFCAPC staff members were entering information about donations into three separate databases, and were using two different programs for donor management and accounting. This resulted in the double or triple input of information, a higher data entry error rate, and difficulty generating financial and fundraising reports. Efforts that should have been spent advancing the organization's mission were being wasted on data entry inefficiencies.

In November 2003, Taproot Foundation awarded SFCAPC a Donor Database Service Grant worth an estimated \$30,000. The Service Grant team was delivered by experts in software, project management, and web development. Following the Taproot Foundation's project management methodology, the volunteer team conducted interviews to evaluate SFCAPC's database needs. After an extensive "Discovery" phase, the team guided the organization through two possible solutions: moving all databases to Salesforce.com, or expanding their use of an existing program, Fund E-Z, to include donor information. After considering both options, SFCAPC chose Fund E-Z. The organization already owned it, was familiar with its interface, and recognized that it had the necessary features. The Service Grant team then facilitated SFCAPC's conversion to Fund E-Z by providing system configuration, data transfer, and end-user training.



SFCAPC's new accounting and donor management software will accommodate future growth while allowing the organization to manage its data more effectively. When the Service Grant team transitioned all funder data to Fund E-Z, SFCAPC's software infrastructure became more user-friendly and gave the organization better control over their mailings. Communicating with donors became much easier, financial reporting became less complicated, and the data entry error rate decreased. One staff member even used the time he saved after implementation to write a new database procedures manual. ■

## Case 5: The American Red Cross and VolunteerMatch

### STEPS IN FOCUS:

1. Market Research and Community Needs Assessments
- ✓ 2. Strategic Planning to Maximize Volunteer Impact
- ✓ 3. Recruiting and Marketing to Prospective Volunteers
4. Interviewing, Screening, and Selecting Volunteers
5. Orienting and Training Volunteers
6. Ongoing Supervision and Management
7. Recognition and Volunteer Development
- ✓ 8. Measuring Outcomes and Evaluating the Process

In the days following Hurricane Katrina, the American Red Cross recognized the pressing need to invest in their information technology to:

- improve the coordination and management of emergency response volunteers;
- expand and diversify the American Red Cross's pool of volunteers for local chapters;
- provide the volunteer-matching functionality of the American Red Cross national website at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org); and

- streamline the management and administrative tasks associated with ongoing volunteer engagement and retention.

Rather than invest funding in designing a new proprietary system to meet these needs, the American Red Cross decided to partner with VolunteerMatch, an organization that specializes in providing online services to support nonprofit, volunteer, and business leaders committed to civic engagement. Together, VolunteerMatch and American Red Cross worked to:

- upgrade all chapter services to improve volunteer engagement, coordination, and communication;
- update and enhance the American Red Cross-VolunteerMatch Portal on [redcross.org](http://redcross.org);
- invest in improved chapter training, education, and support; and
- improve volunteer reporting and tracking systems.

The first-year results of the partnership included:

- An 84% increase in the number of chapters and blood service regions recruiting volunteers online;
- A 141% increase in the number of volunteer referrals from pre-Katrina (May 2005) to post-Katrina (May 2007);
- A 195% increase in the number of available volunteer opportunities;



- Best practice sharing communication channels through training forums and a new resource library available on the Red Cross intranet; and

- “Train-the-trainer” model adoption to engage different capacity building elements within the America Red Cross infrastructure.

According to Kate Forbes, National Chair of Volunteers for the American Red Cross: “Volunteers are the heart and the muscle of the American Red Cross. By helping each of our local chapters recruit new volunteers, VolunteerMatch enhances people’s ability to provide lifesaving service to their local communities.” ■



# What Do We Know About Volunteering In America?

## Why Is Volunteering Important?

- **Volunteering Makes You Healthier** — While healthier people tend to be more likely to volunteer — especially among older adults — the converse may also be true: numerous medical and other rigorous studies demonstrate that volunteering also makes you healthier. Studies find regular volunteering leads to longer life expectancy, higher life satisfaction, lower rates of depression, and greater physical and mental well-being.
- **Social Capital and Volunteering Lead to Stronger and Safer Communities** — Extensive research demonstrates that “social capital” (whether people volunteer, vote, work with their neighbors, and engage in their community in other ways) is key to understanding whether communities work because social relationships or the lack of them matter a great deal. In fact, places with higher levels of volunteering and thus social capital are “likely to have higher educational achievement, better performing governmental institutions, faster economic growth, and less crime and violence.”
- **Volunteers More Generous and Civically Engaged** — Volunteers appear to be more likely to also give money, vote, and engage in their community in other ways.
- **Volunteers Achieve Meaningful Community Outcomes** — A growing number of studies outline how

volunteer activities such as mentoring produce positive outcomes for youth, greater civic outcomes, and can also be quite cost-effective.

- **Volunteers Contributes to Economic Prosperity** — Recent economic research suggests that charitable behaviors such as volunteering and giving may cause greater economic prosperity and even be related to a nation’s gross domestic product.

## Who Volunteers? What Motivates Volunteering?

- **Volunteer Life Cycle** — All studies of volunteering demonstrate that there is a life cycle to volunteering with volunteer rates peaking in mid-life (when one is in your late 30s and 40s) and then declining somewhat as one grows older.
- **Typical Volunteer** — Studies on volunteering find the typical volunteer is female, college educated, and in mid-life, and often with kids in the home. The typical volunteer provides about 52 hours a year, but a substantial number of volunteers engage in a rather limited or “episodic” fashion.
- **Key Influencers** — While a number of the predictors of volunteering have not been uncovered clearly by research, some demographic factors that appear to influence volunteering include: education level, kids in the home, employment, income, homeownership, and owning one’s business. It appears that one’s social networks are important in predicting volunteering and could be one, or the most important factor, in why people volunteer.
- **Finding the Opportunity** — Many studies find that being asked is a major reason many people volunteer, but recent studies indicate that a lot of people approach an organization looking for a volunteer opportunity.

- **Schools and Faith-Based Groups** — Today, almost half of all volunteers serve through or with a religious organizations or educational organizations.

- **Geographical Differences** — Volunteer trends vary substantially by geography, including region, state, and city.

- **Experience as Youth Critical** — Numerous studies demonstrate that today’s youth are volunteering, voting, and politically engaged at higher rates than past decades. Studies also suggest that charitable behavior in one’s youth makes one more likely to give and volunteer as an adult. Emerging research suggest that charitable activities of a religious nature are particularly tied to youthful experiences and parental role models.

- **Older Americans Volunteer More Hours** — Numerous studies demonstrate that – over the last few decades – older Americans (age 65+) have dramatically increased the number of hours they volunteer in a year. Recent research also demonstrates that older American volunteer rates are rising.

- **Boomer Volunteering on the Rise** – When they were younger, Baby Boomers volunteered at lower rates compared to past generations. However, recently their rates have began to surpass past generations (perhaps due to greater education levels and having kids later) and could continue to increase if (as studies indicate) many Boomers choose to continue working well into their 70s.

## What Is The Current State of Volunteer Management?

- **Weak Volunteer Management** — Volunteer management capacity and investment in volunteer management in most nonprofits is extremely low. A small number of organizations employ a staff person with primary responsibility for volunteer

management, and many volunteer coordinators are engaging volunteers without any training in volunteer management.

- **Retention Is Key Issue** — While volunteering remains at high levels compared to past decades, the volunteer rate decreased between 2005 and 2006, and it appears one reason is because a growing number of people are dropping out of volunteering. In fact, about 20.8 million Americans who volunteered in 2005 (1 out of every 3 volunteers) didn’t continue volunteering in 2006.

- **Challenging, Ongoing Assignments Required** – Overall, it appears that individuals are more likely to continue volunteering if they engage in challenging assignments (such a professional and management assistance and tutoring and mentoring vs. general labor and supplying transportation) and regularly volunteer (such as serving 50 or more hours a year or volunteering 12 or more weeks).

- **Key Predictors of Retention** – The following volunteer management practices, which focus on the volunteer experience, appear to be key predictors of volunteer retention:
  - 1) screening and matching volunteer opportunities;
  - 2) volunteer recognition;
  - 3) providing training and professional development; and
  - 4) having current volunteers recruit new volunteers. ■





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