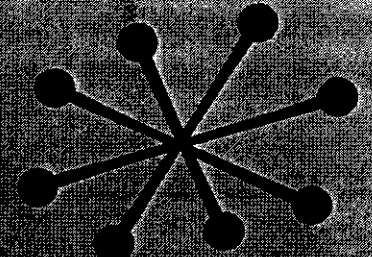


THE GRANTMAKER FORUM ON COMMUNITY & NATIONAL SERVICE
MARCH 2003

THE COST OF A



VOLUNTEER

WHAT IT TAKES TO PROVIDE A QUALITY
VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

THE COST OF A VOLUNTEER

The Grantmaker Forum on Community & National Service, founded in 1993, is an affinity group of grantmakers representing the whole spectrum of philanthropy, including private foundations, individual donors, corporate foundations and community foundations.

The mission of the Grantmaker Forum is to provide leadership and information about the value of service and volunteering and to encourage private and public investment in the field as a means of strengthening communities and building a healthy democracy. The Grantmaker Forum is devoted to raising awareness about the value and power of service and volunteering, and to maximizing opportunities for all Americans to serve.

The Grantmaker Forum pursues its mission through its sponsorship of events, community dialogues, issue-based research, networking, publications, and an annual conference.

For more information about the Grantmaker Forum on Community & National Service, its publications, upcoming events and more, visit the GFCNS web site at: <http://www.gfcns.org>.

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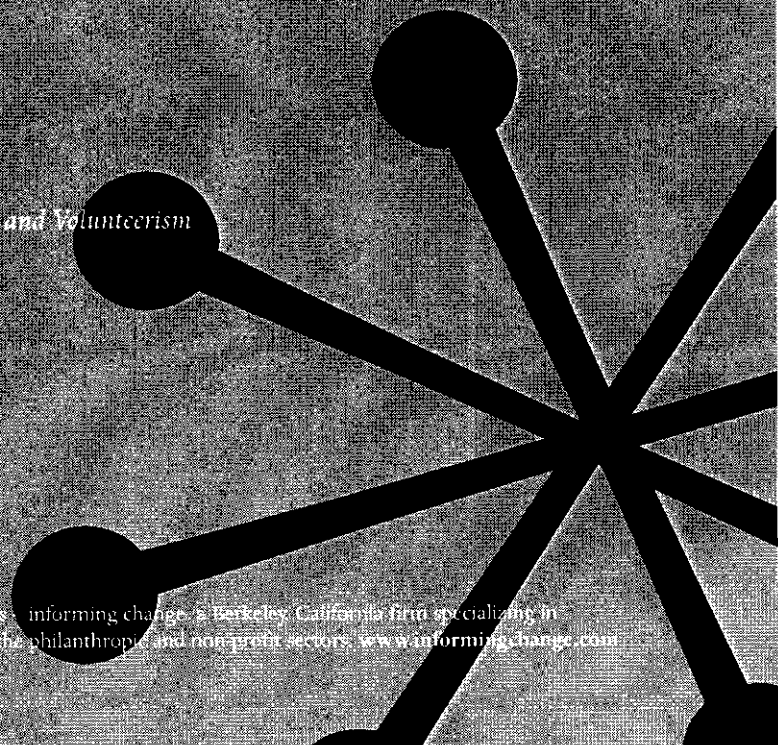
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INTRODUCTION

In his State of the Union address in January 2002, President George W. Bush called on all Americans to become more engaged as active citizens and to devote 4,000 hours, or two years, over their lifetimes to volunteer service. This "Call to Service" brought attention to the need for all Americans to invest themselves in strengthening the nation by taking personal action to improve the lives of others.

In the days and weeks following the President's address, the board and staff of the Grantmaker Forum on Community & National Service heard nonprofit and philanthropic organizations express their concern that as much as they subscribe to the value and ethic of volunteering, they were not certain whether or how the nonprofit sector could absorb a huge infusion of new volunteers. Nonprofit and philanthropic leaders expressed the belief that there was a capacity issue at hand—the sector would need more staff and resources in order to expand its capacity to train and supervise a large increase in volunteers.

Concerned that in the rush to endorse the President's vision for an engaged America we risk minimizing the real costs associated with achieving that vision, the Grantmaker Forum set out to examine what it would take for the country's public charity sector to increase its capacity for citizen service and volunteering.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

With financial support provided by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, the Grantmaker Forum on Community & National Service probed the nonprofit sector's concerns and issues about absorbing an influx of new volunteers. If the President's call to serve is heeded, thousands upon thousands of Americans will knock on the doors of neighborhood nonprofit organizations. What capacity do these organizations have to place them? What financial resources can they draw upon to train them? What infrastructure do they need to supervise volunteers and recognize their contributions?

Clearly it takes some amount of financial capacity for a nonprofit organization to turn even the most eager citizens into valued volunteers. Recognizing that "Volunteers aren't free," the Grantmaker Forum on Community & National Service decided to explore the question: What does it cost to mount an effective and high quality volunteer program?

The information presented here does not attempt to calculate a ratio of return on investment. Instead, it is intended as an exploratory examination of the costs—many of which are hidden—associated with operating a high quality volunteer program. By this work we hope to raise up for further consideration the financial implications for the nonprofit sector of a significant national increase in volunteerism.



METHODS

In order to gain an understanding of the costs of a volunteer, the Grantmaker Forum conducted telephone interviews with staff from 21 high quality volunteer programs from around the country. These interviews relied on a standard survey instrument with some open-ended and some closed-ended questions. The instruments were provided to the key informants in advance of the telephone interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. In most cases, we interviewed the volunteer manager. In cases where there was no volunteer manager, we interviewed the organization's executive director or deputy director. The questions focused on the volunteer program history, numbers of volunteers, program funding and costs, and strategies for volunteer recruitment, training and supervision. In addition, we collected some background material such as program descriptions, budgets, and organizational charts from the participating programs.



DEVELOPING A SAMPLE OF PROGRAMS

Because there is no nationwide accreditation of nonprofit volunteer programs and no single set of standards for volunteer program operations, the concept of "high quality" means different things to different people. In order to develop a sample of "high quality" volunteer programs, the Grantmaker Forum turned to 15 experts for their advice. These individuals have studied volunteerism and train volunteer managers on a national scale. They are well known in the field and know the field well. A list of our experts is appended to this report.

The Grantmaker Forum asked each expert to identify three programs from around the country—urban, suburban, and rural programs; large and small programs; programs for diverse populations—that they consider to be of high quality.¹ The experts referred us to a total of 34 volunteer programs. In some cases more than one expert cited the same program. The goal of the final sample was to have geographic representation and a diversity of services, size and budgets. In the end, the Grantmaker Forum selected 26 programs for further inquiry.

Next the Grantmaker Forum contacted all 26 programs by telephone, described the project and solicited their participation. This process resulted in a final sample of 21 high quality volunteer programs.

The programs represent a range of organizations. They include hospitals, museums, animal shelters, food banks, after school programs, city volunteer programs and others. The ages of the organizations vary, from one that started in 1866 to another that was launched in 1997. Organizational budgets range from \$116,000 to over \$1 billion. Almost all of the organizations receive philanthropic support, and all but four receive some form of government funding. Staffing varies across the organizations as well, from one organization with no full-time professional staff to another with over 5,000 full-time staff.

¹ Specifically, the Forum asked these experts to identify managers of volunteer programs that were known to them or reputed to be providing volunteers with a satisfying and meaningful experience while at the same time delivering high quality services to the clients or community.



LIMITATIONS

This study documents the contours of a limited set of high quality volunteer programs for the purpose of better understanding the costs incurred by organizations that successfully engage volunteers. It is important to note that this effort is limited to a small number of programs and is not necessarily representative of all volunteer organizations in the United States. The intent of this examination is to raise awareness of issues that must be considered and addressed as part of any effort to expand citizen service in the United States.

OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS

This examination began with a review of the literature on the cost and value of volunteering. We were able to find research in the field of economics that placed a dollar value on the work of volunteers, but limited research on assessing the cost of those volunteers to the organizations where they serve.

Many researchers have looked at the contribution volunteering makes to the economy, how income and other factors influence the likelihood of volunteering, and what volunteers get back in return for their contribution of time.² Two common approaches to determining the value of volunteer work are calculating the opportunity cost for the volunteer (the gains the volunteer could make if using that time for employment or recreation) and figuring the cost of replacing the volunteer with paid staff.

The value-added equation is almost always established as a no-cost concept; that is, that volunteers simply and strictly augment the capacity of professional staff. This calculation avoids two critical questions: What resources are needed to sponsor volunteers? And where do those resources come from?

Katherine Gaskin in Europe and Michelle Goulbourne in Canada have looked at the resources needed to sponsor volunteers and have developed sophisticated methods for organizations that are interested in determining the overall value of volunteering.³ In one study, Gaskin calculated a ratio of costs of volunteering to the market or organization salary value of a volunteer's time. Applying this methodology to eight organizations in England, the Netherlands and Denmark, she found that volunteers return between £1.30 and £13.50 for every £1 expended. Calculated in US dollars, that is a return of between \$2.05 and \$21.24 for every \$1.57 expended.⁴

² Govekar, P.L. and M.A. Govekar. "Using Economic Theory and Research to Better Understand Volunteer Behavior." *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 13 (1): 33-48, 2002.

³ Gaskin, K., M. Goulbourne, and A. Ellis. "Measuring Economic Value of Volunteering: Research Findings from Europe and Canada." Paper prepared for the ARNOVA conference, November 2002.

⁴ Institute for Volunteering Research. "Valuing Volunteers in Europe: A Comparative Study of the Volunteer Investment and Value Audit." London: Institute for Volunteering Research. [n.d.]



THE COST OF A VOLUNTEER

The available literature that addresses the costs of volunteering has been focused on developing methods of calculating cost effectiveness. Jeffrey Brudney, professor of Political Science and adjunct professor of Social Work at the University of Georgia, offers a useful outline of some of the direct and indirect cost centers of "housing" volunteers in an organization.⁵ He delineates a simple model for volunteer program managers to follow in order to determine the worth of volunteers to an organization. His work provides a clear and concise primer for organizations seeking to understand the cost and value of volunteering.

Public/Private Ventures (PPV) has attempted to estimate volunteer infrastructure costs. In their July 2002 study, *Making the Most of Volunteers*, PPV concluded that the necessary infrastructure for a volunteer program costs approximately \$300 per year per volunteer.⁶ This figure was calculated on the value of staff time, using the typical staff pay in the study's sample, which was \$23,000 a year plus benefits. Functions included in this infrastructure cost are screening, training and general management.

This figure, however, differs from one put forward in an earlier PPV study on mentoring programs, *Making A Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters*. This study assessed the cost of an effective mentoring match at \$1,000.⁷ The higher costs in the mentoring study reflect additional volunteer program requirements. In addition to the basic volunteer infrastructure functions of screening, training and management, the costs in this study include training beyond the required minimum, additional attention to volunteer placement, and frequent communications with the volunteers and the youth participants.

In general, what the literature suggests supports the findings of our review. Volunteers are not free, and there are challenges to quantifying the costs of a volunteer.

⁵ Brudney, J.L. *Fostering Volunteer Programs in the Public Sector: Planning, Initiating, and Managing Voluntary Activities*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1990.

⁶ Public/Private Ventures. *Making the Most of Volunteers*, July 2002.

⁷ Public/Private Ventures. *Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters*. September 2000.



THEMES

Beyond confirming that “volunteers aren’t free,” the information provided by our sample of 21 programs illustrates the complexity of calculating the costs and value of a volunteer. The information also shows the tension between the programs’ desire for more volunteers and their commitment to manage and support volunteers for quality results.

The most important theme, we would argue, is that more than half of the organizations with which we spoke are unwilling or unable to accept more volunteers. This finding fundamentally challenges the assumption that the only requirement to engage more citizens in volunteer service is an effective call to serve. In fact, if the organizations that are best suited to deploy volunteer capacity are not prepared to accommodate any substantial increase in the number of volunteers they manage, then the call to serve may be heard, but cannot be heeded.

Why would an organization say, “No more volunteers, please”? The themes from our interviews, taken together, provide a portrait of what capacity must be harnessed, supported and built in order to achieve the President’s vision for engaged citizenship.

The Grantmaker Forum on Community & National Service puts forward the following themes that emerged from our review in order to increase our understanding of what it takes to mount an effective volunteer effort.

VOLUNTEERS AREN’T FREE

Consider how the value of volunteers accrues. First, the act of volunteering is an expression of commitment to community, and that has value to the nation. Second, the benefit of the services provided by a volunteer may differ in fundamental ways from services offered by professional staff since the motivation to serve may be different. In some cases, a unique benefit is derived when the volunteer has more in common with the person being served (age, race, economic background or experience) than does the professional staff. Third, volunteers expand the base of community support for the nonprofit organization that sponsors them by making the work of the nonprofit transparent to the community—by bringing the community in, so to speak. In doing this, volunteers provide organizations with word-of-mouth publicity and have the potential to cultivate a broader base of supporters for the agency and its mission. And, of course, in addition to these benefits, volunteers expand organizations’ capacity to deliver services to clients and communities in need.

None of these added values, however, can themselves cover or offset the real financial costs associated with hosting and managing a cadre of volunteers.

Most of us are familiar with community organizations that absolutely depend on volunteers for the delivery of their programs and services. These organizations or the service they deliver would diminish or even disappear without volunteers. In the food banks interviewed as part of this examination, volunteers assume the responsibility for collecting, moving, packaging and handing out the food. In an after-school tutoring program, volunteers provide all the tutoring and support to the youth. These are just two examples of how essential volunteers are to the execution of some programs’ purposes and goals. As one volunteer manager told us, “We would not exist without our volunteers. It’s not just nice, it’s essential.”



THE COST OF A VOLUNTEER

On first glance one might assume that programs that rely significantly on volunteers, like the food banks and tutoring program in our review, would be low-cost programs because of the extent to which their services are delivered by unpaid help. And yet the tutors have to be recruited, screened, trained and carefully supervised. For the food bank volunteers to perform their functions, they first have to be assigned to teams and scheduled with a high degree of coordination across a number of function areas, from food collection to food delivery. In each of these cases, the volunteers succeed and their communities benefit because the volunteers are well supported by teams of paid professional staff.



NO MORE VOLUNTEERS, PLEASE

MORE THAN HALF OF THE ORGANIZATIONS WITH WHICH WE SPOKE INDICATE THAT THEY DO NOT NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS.

"I turn 'em away," said one program manager. "I just can't handle any more." This reluctance to take on more volunteers is based primarily on the capacity of the organization to effectively deploy more volunteer labor. In this environment, we run a risk of overselling volunteer opportunities and then turning people away when they heed the call.

In order to accommodate more volunteers, program managers say they need more organizational capacity—more professional staff, more funding, more infrastructure. Of the nine programs that stated they do in fact need more volunteers, their needs are specific in terms of

NATIONAL SERVICE AND EFFECTIVE VOLUNTEERING

A new development in the last decade has been the arrival of AmeriCorps members on the community service scene. AmeriCorps members receive small stipends and a post-service educational benefit in exchange for one to two years of full- or part-time intensive service in a community agency or collaborative project. These stipended national service members join SeniorCorps volunteers and the older but much smaller corps of VISTA (Volunteers In Service to America) members who have been working with grass roots community organizations since the 1960's. In addition, there is new interest in college work-study placements which for years have provided community nonprofits with low-cost or no-cost labor while enriching thousands of college students' education with a community service experience.

Some organizations have begun to offset the instability of their increasingly casual volunteer pool by bringing in national service members from AmeriCorps, VISTA, or SeniorCorps. Some volunteer programs are also benefiting from consistent support provided by college students in the federally funded community work-study program. One program manager we interviewed credited the federal work-study program for helping him handle the flow of new volunteers. The college work-study volunteers "create stability" in the program's home-work center, said the manager, "because they spend far more time in the center" than the other volunteers.

At this important juncture in our civic history, we have the opportunity to combine the energy and efforts of traditional volunteers with the energy and efforts of stipended volunteers who are recruited and trained through federally-funded national service and college work-study programs. When taken together, these efforts can be mutually reinforcing and maximize the value of each in the enterprise of solving important human and social problems.



scheduling and skills. The key issue is having the capacity to incorporate volunteer labor effectively so that neither the organization nor the volunteer is wasting time.

Several programs we interviewed provided examples of the specific nature of their volunteer needs which may not be met by a general call to service. The Food Bank of the Community Action Partnership of Orange County and Shanti, an organization providing services to people with life-threatening illness, both report a need for daytime volunteers. Both have enough volunteers for evenings and weekends but are challenged to find people who have time to give during business hours. Think Together, an after school program in Santa Ana, California, relies on many college students to tutor school children. During the summers and holidays when students travel or go home and are not available, the program needs one hundred short-term volunteers. The program's recruitment challenge is to fill a recurring but limited need that has specific training and scheduling requirements.

Several managers explained that their programs require volunteers to attend training courses that range from twenty to fifty hours prior to starting volunteer work. The best time to recruit and bring on new volunteers is around the training schedule. These program managers are NOT able to incorporate volunteers at any given moment of the year and therefore do not find large-scale calls to service helpful in their recruitment efforts.

Finally, many institutions such as schools, corporations and religious congregations are organizing groups of volunteers to undertake one-time-only projects. One manager noted in response to this approach, "I'm turning down groups who want to do one-time group projects. I refer them to the Volunteer Center." Much of the work that needs to be done is not feasible in a one-time-only approach.



DIFFERENT VOLUNTEERS - VARIED OPPORTUNITIES

VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTE IN WAYS THAT ARE AS DIVERSE AS THE NEEDS THEY MEET.

Our review demonstrates the wide range of services and support that volunteers provide to community organizations. They serve as docents in museums, patrol the wetlands and package and distribute food to the hungry. They stencil storm drain signs and feed and care for animals in the zoo. They are child advocates and web masters. They're the divers who clean the underwater windows at the Monterey Bay Aquarium. They are the designers and writers for agency newsletters and the community representatives for county government agencies. They are fundraisers at the food bank and lab technicians at the local crime laboratory. The nature of the work and the skills required of volunteers are as varied as the services provided by the nation's nonprofits.

In addition, almost all of the 21 organizations with which we spoke are "employing" volunteers across many, if not all, of the primary organizational functions, from governance to program administration, from direct services to management and supervision.

Because the range of volunteer roles is wide and deep, there is a wide range in the requirements for a volunteer's qualifications, previous experience, time commitment, intensity of service and training. This diversity of volunteer roles and requirements contributes to the difficulty of calculating the cost of an average volunteer, even within one organization. The museum docent requires more training and scheduling than the relief receptionist; the youth program leader needs closer supervision and more support than the food box packer.



21ST CENTURY VOLUNTEERS COST MORE

BECAUSE OF CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND EXPECTATIONS AMONG THOSE WHO VOLUNTEER, ORGANIZATIONS ARE COMPELLED TO INVEST MORE TIME AND MONEY IN THE RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND RETENTION OF 21ST CENTURY VOLUNTEERS THAN OF VOLUNTEERS IN TIMES PAST.

The classic volunteer of forty years ago was a housewife who had enough time available that she was able to commit to a regular schedule for her volunteering—four-to-six hours per week. With this time commitment and regular schedule, she could be relied upon to shoulder significant organizational responsibilities. The 21st century volunteer is more likely to be employed, have professional skills to share, have a limited amount of time available, and have greater need for immediate gratification. The 21st century volunteer seeks “short-term assignments with a high level of personal reward.” Today’s volunteers want to see change happen quickly as a result of their contributions and are less likely to commit over a long period of time on a consistent basis.

One volunteer program leader explained that 21st century volunteers require a kind of job sharing approach to their volunteer service. “We do more short-term projects that are more interesting. People want instant gratification from their volunteer experience.” The classic volunteer asks, “What can I do for you?” The 21st century volunteer says, “What can you do for me?”

Another program has successfully recruited young professionals as new volunteers and donors. However the executive director of this small and young organization acknowledged “a hidden cost involving volunteers who are between jobs or who have just moved here. I spend a lot of time orienting them, and then they move on. I understand, but it is a real costly investment of staff time for a small organization.”

From the standpoint of the organizations recruiting these volunteers, the costs of their volunteer programs are increasing. The organizations need more people to fill their volunteer positions, and they spend more time and money recruiting, organizing, and effectively scheduling new volunteers. Since there are more volunteers required, the cost of training goes up as well.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM COSTS ARE HARD TO FIND

ONLY 13 OF THE 21 ORGANIZATIONS WITH WHICH WE SPOKE HAVE A BUDGET DEDICATED TO THEIR VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS. EVEN AMONG THOSE, MOST OF THE REAL COSTS ARE SUBSUMED WITHIN THE LARGER ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGETS - THEY ARE EFFECTIVELY INVISIBLE TO THE INQUIRING MIND.

Traditionally the nonprofit sector has promoted to its government and philanthropic supporters that its reliance on volunteers is a low-cost or no-cost service delivery strategy. Philanthropic and government supporters have been reluctant to finance organizational infrastructure expenses such as capital costs, management and supervision, equipment and supplies. The result is a lack of information about the costs of mounting a volunteer program, compounded by the challenge of actually quantifying those costs—costs that that may be shared across different functions and programs within an organization.



The evidence abounds. Even for those organizations with dedicated volunteer program budgets, the budgets are minimal and generally cover only recognition, materials or recruitment. While many programs include a line for staffing, it is almost always defined strictly as the volunteer program manager, excluding the cost of the time of those professionals outside of the volunteer program who have responsibilities for training and supervising volunteers. Yet the contribution of these department or project supervisors is cited over and over as essential to the quality and success of the volunteer programs.

To illustrate, the Valley Hospital's volunteer budget includes a line for staffing that covers five full-time positions and a part-time weekend assistant. But the budget does not reflect the time of the nearly one hundred hospital staff who supervise the volunteers and give assignments on a daily basis. The Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara & San Mateo Counties' volunteer program budget covers only volunteer recognition even though the organization employs a full-time and part-time volunteer coordinator.

The cost of providing office space, telephone and other overhead for the volunteer program is included in only three of the organizations' volunteer budgets. Most programs purchase some insurance coverage for their volunteers⁸, but only six list insurance as a discrete cost.

To the extent that we were able to ascertain volunteer program costs, the "budgets" provided by the organizations reflect a range from forty-two cents per volunteer to \$410. While we may safely assume that forty-two cents is low, we have no way of knowing if even \$410 is adequate or sufficient.

The tendency for organizations to subsume their volunteer program costs into their general operating budget may reflect a discomfort about the real costs associated with having volunteers. We are all proud of the contributions of volunteers and the fact that volunteers contribute without expectation of monetary reward. But the myth of "free" volunteers confounds the development of helpful policy, funding and technical assistance for the infrastructure of America's volunteer network.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE FUNDED BY PHILANTHROPY THAN BY GOVERNMENT.

With respect to their overall organizational budgets, 19 of the 21 organizations in our review receive funding from philanthropy. The two organizations that indicate that they do not receive philanthropic support actually set up free-standing nonprofit organizations to solicit donations and grants, so in essence they too receive philanthropic support. Only 13 of the 21 organizations receive funding from government sources, and the federal government and local government are listed more frequently than state government.

In terms of financial support specifically for volunteer program operations, philanthropy is the most prevalent funder. To the extent that there is a dramatic increase in volunteering, this

⁸ Insurance for volunteers includes accident and illness insurance or workers' compensation insurance, excess auto insurance if volunteers drive their cars for any part of their volunteer work, and additional costs in the organizations' liability insurance, depending on the work that the volunteers do. This insurance can range from a few dollars a year per volunteer for a small program to thousands of dollars for large scale programs. Most voluntary organizations also purchase Directors and Officers insurance for their board of directors.



WHAT IT TAKES

In order to maintain an effective and high quality volunteer program, professional staff must dedicate time to communicate with and supervise volunteers. The volunteer program staff and others who directly supervise volunteers need to allocate time to provide training, day-to-day support and oversight of the volunteers' work, in addition to interacting with and showing interest in the volunteers.

According to research conducted by the UPS Foundation, the primary reason people stop volunteering is because of poor management.¹ As nonprofits are called upon to provide more and better quality services, says the UPS Foundation, organizations and grantmakers must work together to build the nonprofit sector's capacity to manage volunteers appropriately and effectively.

Training

Program managers state that the best training is conducted on a one-on-one basis, with volunteers having an orientation to the agency and its services and then specific preparation for the responsibilities associated with their assignments. From an efficiency standpoint, however, most volunteer training occurs on a group basis.

Supervision

Supervising a volunteer is a real and significant responsibility, explained one program manager. "For staff who supervise volunteers it must be written into their job descriptions, and they must be evaluated on it."

Recognition & Appreciation

A distinguishing characteristic of a volunteer from a paid employee is that he or she is doing the work more out of personal commitment and gratification than out of a desire for financial compensation. Even in cases where a volunteer receives a stipend, the remuneration is substantially less than wages for comparable work. The motivation to volunteer and therefore the rewards for volunteering are distinct from the motivation and rewards associated with employment.

"The human connection of volunteering is costly," states one program manager. Volunteers require "a level of attention, caring and support" in a way that employed staff may not, said another. "For example," explained one informant, "volunteers need and expect to be greeted as they arrive and asked about how they are doing." Another explained, "I always keep my door open for volunteers who want to drop in and talk." In order to retain volunteers, notes one manager, "We must be friendly, considerate, caring, interested in their lives outside the organization." Managers acknowledge that this is a required cost of operating a quality volunteer program.

Management Models

Volunteers can be recruited, trained, managed and supervised within a discrete volunteer program or they can be recruited and organized by one department and then trained and supervised across a variety of functional areas within an organization. Each approach has benefits for different service-delivery models.

¹ United Parcel Service, Points of Light Foundation, Association of Volunteer Administrators. *A Guide to Investing in Volunteer Resources Management: Improve Your Philanthropic Portfolio*. November 2002. www.avaintl.org/advocacy/fundersguide.pdf.



suggests that nonprofit organizations will seek support from the philanthropic sector unless and until the public sector recognizes the need for resources and releases funds to unleash capacity for citizen service. The public sector could expand the nonprofit sector's capacity to absorb more volunteers if it would relax restrictions on the use of public funds to enable nonprofits to pay for the infrastructure and administrative costs associated with their volunteer programs, from recruitment to management and supervision.

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT IS A VALUE, NOT JUST A STRATEGY FOR SERVICE DELIVERY.

Organizations that operate high quality volunteer programs have a stated commitment to volunteers—it is a part of their organizational philosophy and is reinforced in the culture of the organization. Five of the organizations in our review note that they were started by volunteers. Others noted the engagement of volunteers as part of the original vision for the organization and its services. The program managers often cite “charismatic leaders,” “the founders’ vision,” and “high energy people” that championed the role of volunteers. They talk about the importance of the involvement by board leaders and executive directors or CEOs in the assessment and development of the volunteer program.

High quality volunteer programs develop and grow best when the organizational culture acknowledges and values the range of assets that volunteers contribute. According to one program manager, “Organizations that run successful volunteer programs have a well articulated philosophy—the professional staff sees the supervision and support of volunteers as part of their jobs.” One organization provides a philosophy statement about volunteers to all new employees. Another includes volunteer supervision and support as an element of every employee’s performance review. “It has to start at the top,” stated one key informant. “The philosophy has to be there.”

Nonprofit organizations that have a vision for incorporating volunteers in service delivery accrue advantages over time to their volunteer programs. The support, supervision and attention that volunteers require, not to mention the logistical aspects of scheduling volunteer labor, are significant burdens to an organization and cannot be established casually as an “add on” service. New organizations and organizations interested in adding a volunteer component to existing programs should have access to technical assistance and materials that draw on what strong voluntary organizations have learned as they built their programs.



CONCLUSION

When the Grantmaker Forum on Community & National Service set out to undertake this review, we did so with a commitment to bring forward the concerns of programs that rely on volunteers. While limited in scope, our examination effectively brings to life the experience of these programs, with insights into the many ways in which they rely on volunteers, the commitment that is required of them to do so, the challenges they face in engaging volunteer support, and the benefits that accrue as well.

As a nation our efforts to address important human and social problems may benefit from broader and deeper community involvement in service and volunteering, but a non-specific call for thousands of new volunteers will not by itself create effective engagement. The national call to service needs a companion effort to ensure that volunteers are deployed in meaningful and effective ways, and that nonprofits are prepared to deliver a quality volunteer experience so that volunteers can deliver a quality service to their communities. Without adequate nonprofit capacity to receive and engage volunteers, a call to service risks drawing potential volunteers into a disappointing or frustrating experience that discourages them from volunteering in the future.

The ethic and successful practice of citizen service requires a thoughtful, well-organized match between the interests and motivations of individuals and the real and practical needs of organizations.

While we have not been able to quantify the specific cost of a volunteer, we are able to identify the nature of those costs. To the extent that the nation rallies behind a vision of an engaged America—an America where each of us recognizes not only the opportunity but the obligation we have to give back—it will be necessary to build up the community capacity to accommodate our gifts of time and service. And these costs may be well justified if the experience of service helps us to transcend our differences, if it gives us common pursuits, and if, by our energy and efforts, we solve pressing and important human and social problems.



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PROGRAM PROFILES

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS

Organization/ Program	Location	Organizational budget	Volunteer program budget?	Number of volunteers	Volunteer program staff*	Other staff who work with volunteers
Alameda County Food Bank	Oakland, CA	\$3,800,000	Y	3,800	3	34
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum	Tucson, AZ	\$7,000,000	Y	400	1	55
Center for Food Action, NW	Ringwood, NJ	\$2,100,000	N	4,500	0	20
City of Mountainview	Mountainview, CA	\$165,189,051	Y	600	2	12
Community Action Partnership of Orange County	Garden Grove, CA	\$18,000,000	N	11,000	0	29
County of Sonoma	Santa Rosa, CA	\$1,003,500,000	Y	2,100	3	250
Courage Center	Minneapolis, MN	\$31,000,000	Y	2,300	7	112
Interreligious Fellowship for the Homeless of Bergen County	Teaneck, NJ	\$1,500,000	Y	4,500	1	4
Marin Civic Center (County of Marin)	San Rafael, CA	\$300,000,000	N	3,300	3	150
Monterey Bay Aquarium	Monterey, CA	\$43,000,000	Y	944	4.5	55
Pima Animal Control (Pima County)	Tucson, AZ	\$3,000,000	N	40	3	27
Project Angelheart	Denver, CO	\$1,100,000	Y	2,500	2	13
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties	San Jose, CA	\$11,600,000	Y	2,500	3	70
Shanti	San Francisco, CA	\$4,500,000	N	200	3	10
Somerset Medical Center	Somerville, NJ	\$146,000,000	Y	1,000	4	30
Think Together	Santa Ana, CA	\$1,300,000	Y	550	3	13
Tu Nidito	Tucson, AZ	\$585,000	Y	150	1	9
The Valley Hospital	Ridgewood, NJ	\$295,000,000	Y	2,000	6	100
Volunteer Jacksonville	Jacksonville, FL	\$700,000	N	200	1	12
Volunteers in Protective Service	Hackensack, NJ	\$644,000	Y	300	3	14
World Pulse	Oakland, CA	\$116,000	N	40	1	1

*Full-time and part-time paid staff



PROGRAM PROFILES



Alameda County Community Food Bank

Oakland, CA

NATURE OF SERVICES: A network of 300 hunger relief organizations — distribution of food assistance, education regarding hunger and poverty

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$3,800,000

SOURCES OF FUNDS: Individuals, foundations, corporations, federal government, state government, local government

HOW LONG HAS THE ORGANIZATION BEEN IN EXISTENCE: 17 years

STAFF: 32 full-time, 2 part-time

WHAT VOLUNTEERS DO: On the Board, warehouse screening and sorting donated food, office, emergency food referral service

FIRST BEGAN RELYING ON VOLUNTEERS: 1985

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS: 3,800

AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS PER VOLUNTEER PER MONTH: 8

HOW LONG DO VOLUNTEERS STAY WITH THE PROGRAM: 10 months

DO YOU NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS THAN YOU CAN RECRUIT: No. Would need more opportunities or to extend hours of operation

FUNCTIONS OF VOLUNTEERS: Direct services, community organizing or outreach, administrative or clerical, Board

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM BUDGET: \$2,500, includes recruitment and recognition

PAID STAFF WORKING ON VOLUNTEER PROGRAM: 1 full-time, 2 part-time

OTHER STAFF WHO WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS: "Most of our 34-member staff in one way or another work with volunteers, whether it's office, warehouse, or board members."

City of Mountainview

Mountainview, CA

NATURE OF SERVICES: Acts as a clearing-house for volunteer services in city departments

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$165,189,051

SOURCES OF FUNDS: Federal, state, and local government; philanthropic, sales tax

HOW LONG HAS THE ORGANIZATION BEEN IN EXISTENCE: 16 years

STAFF: 550 full-time, 100 part-time

WHAT VOLUNTEERS DO: A variety of positions in city departments - graphic design, photography, special events, emergency preparedness, senior center programs, ushers and art docents in the center for performing arts, library, office assistants, storm drain stenciling, day camps, teen programs, tenant/landlord mediators and more!

FIRST BEGAN RELYING ON VOLUNTEERS: 1988

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS: 600 plus

AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS PER VOLUNTEER PER MONTH (APPROX.): 8

HOW LONG DO VOLUNTEERS STAY WITH THE PROGRAM (APPROX.): 5 years

DO YOU NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS THAN YOU CAN RECRUIT: No. Would need more staff — a 10-hour per week person to build opportunities

FUNCTIONS OF VOLUNTEERS: Program administration, management and supervision, direct services, public information, administrative or clerical

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM BUDGET: \$78,988. Budget covers a 3/4 time staff to coordinate program city wide, recruitment, placement, marketing materials and outreach, recognition and professional affiliations.

PAID STAFF WORKING ON VOLUNTEER PROGRAM: 1.75 FTE staff

OTHER STAFF WHO WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS: 12 department liaisons.

QUOTE: "Keeping communities connected keeps communities strong."



PROGRAM PROFILES

Community Action Partnership of Orange County Food Bank

Garden Grove, California

NATURE OF SERVICES: Anti-poverty agency

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$18,000,000

SOURCES OF FUNDS: Federal government, state government, local government, philanthropic, earned income

HOW LONG HAS THE ORGANIZATION BEEN IN EXISTENCE: 37 years

STAFF: 97 full-time, 1 part-time

WHAT VOLUNTEERS DO: Food packaging, involved in every aspect of the agency

FIRST BEGAN RELYING ON VOLUNTEERS: 1980

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS: 11,000

AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS PER VOLUNTEER PER MONTH: 4

HOW LONG DO VOLUNTEERS STAY WITH THE PROGRAM: 3 years

DO YOU NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS THAN YOU CAN RECRUIT: Yes, for daytime hours

FUNCTIONS OF VOLUNTEERS: Management and supervision, direct services, public information and outreach, administrative or clerical, warehouse labor (sorting, assembling)

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM BUDGET: None

PAID STAFF WORKING ON VOLUNTEER PROGRAM: 3 part-time staff

OTHER STAFF WHO WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS: 27

QUOTE: "I can't identify the specific volunteer costs. The volunteer program is a necessary part of what we do. It's absorbed into tasks of others, and into the budget."

County of Sonoma Volunteer and Intern Program

Santa Rosa, California

NATURE OF SERVICES: County government

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$1,003,500,000

SOURCES OF FUNDS: Federal, state, local government

HOW LONG HAS THE ORGANIZATION BEEN IN EXISTENCE: 156 years

STAFF: 5,060 — 4,060 permanent and 1,000 temporary

WHAT VOLUNTEERS DO: A wide range of services — in the animal shelter, emergency disaster services, law enforcement, parks, search and rescue, gardeners, mentors, friendly visitors, and more.

FIRST BEGAN RELYING ON VOLUNTEERS: 1984

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS: 2,100

AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS PER VOLUNTEER PER MONTH (APPROX.): 12

HOW LONG DO VOLUNTEERS STAY WITH THE PROGRAM: Average varies by program from one day to 25 years

DO YOU NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS THAN YOU CAN RECRUIT: Yes, but would need additional designated staff to utilize them

FUNCTIONS OF VOLUNTEERS: Program administration, management and supervision, direct services, community organizing and outreach, public information, administrative or clerical, advisory boards and commissions

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM BUDGET: \$125,649, includes staffing, recruitment and promotion, materials, recognition, volunteer insurance

PAID STAFF WORKING ON VOLUNTEER PROGRAM: 3 part-time

OTHER STAFF WHO WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS: 250

QUOTE: "It is essential to the survival of a volunteer program to have support from the top."