



The Center for Creative Community



Matching Citizen Participation As a Condition of Funding for Human Service Programs @

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A Concept Paper

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Introduction, Rationale

At least one in four adult Americans volunteer . Our volunteer army today is at least thirty-five million strong. The human values are beyond price; the dollar value or purchase price is estimated at forty billion dollars annually.

This is an encouraging vital sign in America today. But it is not enough. Today's problems are 100 percent problems, they require participation in their solution by far closer to 100 percent of Americans. This could be so; indeed it must be so in an era of increasing identification of needs and tightening dollars. Dollars must be stretched to the limit through volunteer assistance; service programs must be more relevant and responsive as a result of citizen involvement.

Why hasn't it happened? One commonly agreed reason is the failure of organizations and agencies to give sufficient operations priority to the encouragement of volunteer participation within their agency.

[Quotes from Winning With Staff: That staff/agency resistance to volunteers has been at the top of the problem parade for several years, and a little bit about why]

Too often, the gatekeepers keep the gate closed to citizen participation, or open it just a crack for token programs.

The problem is not ignorance. We do know how to operate a volunteer program. Today we do have a body of knowledge available and accessible, for effective implementation of citizen participation efforts. We know that when organizations to place sufficient operational priority on volunteer program development and maintenance, meaningful and effective volunteer participation can result.

The problem is failure to place higher priority on this development. Sometimes described as agency or staff "resistance" to volunteers, it is actually less a matter of overt hostility to volunteers, and more a matter of indifference. Agency and organizational leadership simply vacate this priority in response to other priorities perceived as urgent for the organization's survival and well-being.

Friendly persuasion and cognitive processes such as staff training for the use of volunteers have understandably made little progress against such gut-level perceptions of agency survival priorities.

If volunteer programs are ever to become an integral and more than a marginal part of human service delivery systems, it is, this gut-level perception of priorities which must change. A motivational solution is necessary.*

This motivational solution hinges on dollars. The proposal here is to explore the possibility of making receipt of funding, for any purpose** from either government or private sources, contingent on matching citizen participation in the recipient agency, in both service and policy-making roles, wherever reasonably possible. Such a policy would accomplish two primary purposes. From the perspective of, the recipient agency it would solidly link citizen participation and organizational survival. The will to involve volunteers would be there, as a top priority.

From the view point of funding agencies, the advantages would be stretching their service dollars, through the amplification and supplementation of volunteer services. Other advantages would be some assurance of the-credibility- of the agency in the community (people think enough of it to work for free in its behalf) also some hope that the agency

has an opportunity to be responsive to community needs, through its volunteers and their close-in observation and input.

This is a "leverage point" strategy. A relatively small amount of effort invested at the point of funding impact, in establishing such a policy, would have profound, ramifying effects throughout the volunteer sector. Volunteers would be more welcome, courted and supported by agencies. Quite possibly, there would be a spread of effect to education; professional schools would see the point of educating their students in the productive involvement of volunteers, as a part of their job.

Within the present project, a leverage strategy will also be adopted. Prominent, pattern-setting funding sources would be approached first. Among these we would expect to include major federal funding agencies; major pace setting private foundations; United Way of America or a set of local United Ways; and Mutual Benefit Societies.

An alternative entry model, recently suggested, would be initial concentration on one geographic area of the country and/or one service area, and/or one funding agency or set of agencies.

These funding sources would be approached on the basis of guidelines for any service program or project funding, not just for citizen participation/ voluntary projects. Moreover, address would be to an rather than piece-by-piece partial policies.

Such policies might be established by legislation or regulation in government agencies, in which case the project would serve as resource in the drafting of legislation, regulation, and procedures for implementation. Our approach to private funding sources would be entirely on the merits of the case for adjustments in their overall giving policy. As indicated elsewhere in this concept paper, we believe philanthropic self-interest will prompt their interest and cooperation.

The options then are regulation, legislation, granting (especially criteria for grant award). Another, perhaps simpler initial approach would be clarifying, strengthening, and applying consistently; policies which recognize (the dollar value of) volunteer time as in-kind match.

It must not be imagined that such a policy is entirely new, or without its problematical aspects. As for the first point, United Way of America does have a policy requiring the involvement of volunteers on community planning and allocation committees, and in fund raising within the local United Way structure itself. However, this policy do not extend to requirements for volunteer program participation in United Way funded agencies.

Closer approach was more recently described in "Count Us In: Public Broadcasting's Volunteer Amendment", by Phyllis Denny in Summer, 1979, Volunteer Administration.

Harriet Naylor, Volunteer Consultant to HEW, is currently involved in determining the feasibility of mandated citizen participation as a condition for receipt of government funding. An early example of this was the Harris Amendment in 1969. This mandated the involvement of volunteers in welfare agencies. It was far from completely successful in achieving full compliance.

In other instances, relatively vague and ambivalent policies do exist, poorly articulated and inconsistently applied.

In all, there are enormous potential problematical areas and consequences which need to be thought through very carefully before any policy, regulation, etc. is recommended. Among these are:

--Will the resulting pressure produce reluctant (token, over-rigid, etc.) programs?

--Will it increase the standardization/monitoring/policy pressures already put on volunteer programs by funding sources.

--Under what conditions should the matching citizen participation mandate recognize the applicant agency might need some additional funds to develop and/or augment its volunteer program (e.g., hiring a volunteer director, staff training, etc.)?

--What are the implications for vastly increased demands for technical assistance in volunteer program planning, maintenance, and development. Who would fund/provide this, and how? (((Less today, now that we have more of a resource apparatus for volunteerism)))

--Crucially how broad will our definition of citizen participation be?

--Hopefully, it would be inclusive far beyond traditional volunteer service programs, to comprise issue-oriented and policy participation, self-help volunteering, etc. (See Ivan's New Book: Volunteer Space)

A related potential difficulty would be the need to monitor the validity and extent of claimed matching citizen participation. Moreover, some provision might have to be made for lead-time in which to develop a volunteer program, if and where it did not presently exist significantly. Other potential difficulties are described later in this paper.

Accordingly, the present project would begin by a study and analysis of existing precedent, and how it might be better articulated and applies in the future. The need to precede implementation with careful study, must be stressed. Casual,

or hurried formulation of policy courts disaster, until such time as critical "side effects" of any policy can be thoroughly studied.

Purpose of the Project

A. Thorough (1) study of existing prototypes, (2) pilot test operation, and (3) evaluation of pilot test operations.

B. To develop a (1) better articulated justification, and (2) guidelines for realistic application of a matching citizen involvement policy governing awards of any funds for support of human service organizations or agencies.

This governance would be broadly and flexibly defined, depending on circumstances, as either conditions or criteria, or consideration affecting allocations or grant award decisions.

The concept of citizen involvement or volunteering would likewise be construed broadly and flexibly,* to include policy-making as well as service volunteering, client as well as community participation, issue-orientation, possibly self-helping and community networking.*

Strategies/Methodologies

Phase I (12 –18 months)

A. Activities

1. Study of prototype guidelines, relevant documents (such as Harris Amendment, Jim Cook paper, relevant Filer Commission materials)
2. Interview of experts including:
 - a. program officers of foundations or government
 - b. people who have been impacted/involved in Harris Amendment or other prototypes
 - c. Filer Commission people, some of them
 - d. Harriet Naylor, HEW

B. Products

1. Refined analysis of implications of alternative policies. Expected positive outcomes would be developed here, as well as cautions and dangers; from viewpoint of funding source.
 - a. Positive outcomes of the policy, for example, are now believed to include:
 1. stretching the impact of the service dollar
 2. under certain conditions, de facto implication of community approval on the relevance/credibility of the grantee organization, by virtue of their willingness to work for it, without pay.
 3. under certain conditions, at least some potential for enhanced community input to the organization
 4. conceivably, some benefits from correlation between giving of time and giving of money (for United Way grantees?)
 - b. Certain dangers have already been mentioned, including the need to monitor or "police" volunteer programs, and related "straight-jacketing."

Another possible danger is volunteer programs "over-standardization" via "guidelines" from the funding agency.

2. Refined analysis of reasonable exemptions in application. For example, the application of the policy would at the very least be attenuated, in the case of a grant to a hospital to purchase sophisticated new equipment.

Presumably, policy would apply more clearly to funding for personnel, but much has to be clarified here.

Another exemption might be the case where a volunteer program does not currently exist in significant form, but a pledge is made to develop one. Reasonable lead-time for development might then be considered, with evaluation of success providing a contingency for future funding.

3. Preparation of first revised guidelines or set of alternative guidelines in major variations adapted to major types of funding sources, and funding areas.

Phase II (12 – 18 months)

- A. Test application of first justification and guidelines for representative set of sites and funding sources.
- B. Evaluate feedback and analysis.

C. Second revised guidelines are prepared. For government funding sources, this could now include recommended regulations and legislation.

Phase II (12 – 18 months)

General dissemination, implementation, for example advocacy in the Congress, at major conferences for foundations heads, etc.

*Refer to Winning With Staff

**Please note: for any service purpose, by no means just volunteer program funding.



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