

THE LEIGHTY FOUNDATION



**Partnering with Funders to
Unleash the Power of Volunteers**

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Introduction: Are Your Efforts Worthy of an Investment?

Our country and democracy face daunting challenges, and a spectrum of mission-driven organizations are poised to tackle them. But increasing competition for funding coupled with dramatically escalating needs can be overwhelming and often impedes progress. Millions of people in communities nationwide have the energy and desire to volunteer, but most organizations lack the necessary support and direction to fully integrate and empower this renewable resource effectively.

Additionally, funding for building volunteer engagement capacity and infrastructure remains the exception rather than the rule. Why is it so difficult? The answer is not simple, but we believe it stems from common challenges and misconceptions within organizations and in the philanthropic community. It is critical that we resolve these issues, as mission-driven organizations, including nonprofits and funders, can help reinforce and sustain democratic values through strategic engagement of citizens as volunteers in meaningful ways.



For 20 years, prior to the creation of our family foundation, I served as both a practitioner and national trainer in the field of volunteer engagement. I saw firsthand the effect that well-placed and equipped volunteers had on many organizations. I also witnessed how poorly managed organizations missed out on experiencing the game-changing potential of empowered human capital to help them accomplish their critical missions. How well an organization engaged their volunteer workforce was indeed a bellwether for its overall health.

Funders rarely recognize the potential of volunteer engagement in mission fulfillment and, therefore, rarely fund volunteer engagement infrastructure. Furthermore, organizations aren't always skilled at making the case for how infrastructure support leads to mission impact. Doing so starts with considering the following questions:

- As an organization engaging volunteers, how can you inspire funders to financially support you in building the needed capacity?
- How can we shift the paradigm to ensure volunteer engagement is viewed by funders as a cost-effective strategy critical to empowering organizations to achieve their missions?

I invite you to read on to learn how you can educate and motivate both the leadership in your organization and funders in your community to support capacity building through volunteer engagement!

Wishing you great success,

Jane Leighty Justis, *President, The Leighty Foundation*

Is Volunteer Engagement a “Program” or a “Strategy”?

Volunteer engagement can increase an organization’s capacity well beyond what staff alone can achieve. By embracing volunteer engagement as a core strategy, organizations increase their impact significantly. Before making the case to a funder to invest in volunteer engagement, it’s important to model strategic engagement within your organization. Shifting from volunteer engagement as a program to an organization-wide strategy takes time. However, by starting with just a few of the steps below, you will be able to authentically demonstrate the benefits to your organization. You are then ready to invite funders to invest in future opportunities to further build your capacity through citizen engagement.

Organizations that view volunteer engagement as a strategy do all of the following:

Involve Volunteers Across the Organization

- Think strategically about how to involve volunteers at all levels of the organization.
- Develop volunteer roles in response to real organizational needs.
- Have a volunteer pool that reflects the diversity of the community they serve.
- Engage volunteers in roles that leverage their skills and treat them as valuable members of work teams.
- Ensure the executive team—including the CEO and board—nurture innovative volunteer involvement. The director/CEO should serve as a model by working directly with volunteers themselves.

Commit to Volunteer Engagement

- Articulate the value of volunteer engagement in the organization’s strategic plan.
- Have/prepare organizational leaders who actively support and model strategic volunteer engagement.
- Dedicate budgetary resources to support volunteer involvement.
- Have a staff professional dedicated to volunteer engagement.
- Have volunteer engagement policies and procedures that are comprehensive, clear and consistently applied.

Train Staff and Volunteers Effectively

- Effectively train volunteers in their work and in the work of the agency.
- Provide training in volunteer supervision/partnership to all staff members who engage and support volunteers.

Measure and Communicate Volunteer Impact

- Measure and communicate the overall impact of volunteer involvement.
- Include volunteer empowerment as a performance measure for staff.
- Recognize volunteers in personally meaningful ways.
- Evaluate how partnering with volunteers impacts your mission currently.



Assessing Your Organization's Volunteer Engagement Capacity

Use the statements below to assess your overall capacity to engage, support, and sustain volunteer resources and increase impact through strategic engagement.

Organizational Commitment to Engagement				
Rate how true the following statements are for your organization.	Completely True	Mostly True	Somewhat True	Not at all True
We have a strategic plan that includes volunteer engagement and/or a stated philosophy of engagement.				
We engage volunteers across all levels of the organization.				
We assess organizational needs and develop volunteer opportunities to address those needs.				
Our leaders explicitly support strategic engagement, model engagement and talk about it widely.				
The volunteer corps reflects the diversity of the community we serve.				
We have a professional dedicated to volunteer engagement on staff, and that individual's position within the organizational structure reflects the level of resources the position oversees.				
Volunteer engagement is incorporated into all staff position descriptions, which hold staff members accountable for doing so.				

Volunteer Roles				
Rate how true the following statements are for your organization.	Completely True	Mostly True	Somewhat True	Not at all True
We regularly assess goals and needs to identify opportunities to engage volunteers in the work.				
We engage volunteers in roles that leverage their skills (such as team leaders, project managers, pro bono consultants, skilled laborers, technology experts, etc.).				
We offer flexible schedules and/or virtual volunteer opportunities.				
We have written position/project descriptions for current and future volunteer opportunities.				
We include volunteers as equal members of teams.				
Cultivation				
Rate how true the following statements are for your organization.	Completely True	Mostly True	Somewhat True	Not at all True
We have a volunteer cultivation plan that is reviewed regularly.				
We support and encourage individuals to take on new roles in order to stay connected over the years.				
We train and support staff and volunteers in how to effectively cultivate volunteers.				
Screening and Placement				
Rate how true the following statements are for your organization.	Completely True	Mostly True	Somewhat True	Not at all True
We have an effective screening process for each volunteer position, and it is appropriate to				

the level of skill and risk for each position.				
We involve both volunteers and staff in the interviewing and placement process.				
We place volunteers into positions only when their skills, motivations and interests are a strong match for the position specifically and organizational culture overall.				
Support and Accountability				
Rate how true the following statements are for your organization.	Completely True	Mostly True	Somewhat True	Not at all True
We provide all volunteers with an orientation to familiarize them with the people, systems, programs and policies relevant to their work with the organization.				
We ensure that staff and volunteers agree on timeline, communication, outcomes and accountability for the work at the start of all collaborative projects.				
We allocate adequate budget, space, technology and equipment for volunteers to be successful in their roles.				
Training and Professional Development				
Rate how true the following statements are for your organization.	Completely True	Mostly True	Somewhat True	Not at all True
We train and coach all staff members to work effectively with volunteers.				
Volunteers receive training specific to their roles.				
Volunteer engagement is incorporated into all staff position descriptions and staff members are held accountable appropriately.				

Evaluation, Recognition and Acknowledgement				
Rate how true the following statements are for your organization.	Completely True	Mostly True	Somewhat True	Not at all True
We regularly measure and evaluate volunteer impact.				
We acknowledge individual volunteer contributions and impact through creative and personally meaningful ways.				
We assess the performance and effectiveness of individual volunteers.				
We routinely share volunteer impact with leadership, partners, funders and the community at large.				
Policies, Infrastructure and Technology				
Rate how true the following statements are for your organization.	Completely True	Mostly True	Somewhat True	Not at all True
We develop comprehensive volunteer engagement policies and review them regularly.				
We include volunteer engagement in our risk management planning.				
We use technology to make volunteer cultivation, tracking, scheduling and training easy and efficient.				
We coordinate and communicate between the agency's volunteer engagement and fund development functions.				

Adapted from VQ Volunteer Strategies' "Assessment of Organizational Volunteer Engagement."

What Funders Want to Know

While funders should seek to assess the overall capacity of a nonprofit to strategically engage volunteers, many may not be familiar enough with volunteer engagement to ask the right questions. Some funders may believe volunteer engagement competes with, rather than enhances, their support of their grantees (i.e., “We don’t fund volunteers, we fund the environment ... or child development ... or food insecurity ...”).

Opening a dialogue with potential funders will provide an opportunity to share important information and potentially expand a funder’s thinking. Connect the dots for them by offering a statement such as: “We know that sustainability is important criteria you consider as you review grant proposals” and talking about the return on investment for volunteer engagement.

Through grant proposals and dialogue during site visits, nonprofit leaders have the opportunity to ensure:



- Grant makers have specific information to use in determining that your request is viable.
- Grant makers are aware that you have assessed how your organization measures up to a set of recognized standards for volunteer involvement.
- You and funders have informed dialogue that strengthens your relationship.

In interviews with three foundations that support capacity-building and provide funding for general operating expenses – the kind of expenses that sustain most volunteer programs—a blogger in the volunteer engagement field recently found that funders want to see grantees demonstrate that volunteers are being used effectively and strategically. Yet nonprofits rarely cite strategic impact measures for their volunteers in proposals—and rarely even include any reference to volunteers at all.¹

From the funder perspective, the dollar equivalent of volunteer time can be an essential metric for assessing the impact of volunteers, as it enables them to multiply the impact of every donation. If a nonprofit operates on a budget of \$1 million, and receives the equivalent of \$2 million in volunteer hours, this suggests that a grant will have an exponential impact. But keep in mind the need for demonstrable outcomes extends beyond the volunteer contribution. Funders are looking to understand how an investment aligns with the organization’s strategy. **How is the request going to deepen or expand impact?**

Additionally, a 2014 survey conducted by Fidelity Charitable found that 87% of volunteers surveyed indicated an overlap between their volunteer efforts and financial support, and 50% of volunteers reported giving more financial support because they volunteer.² Clearly, people give their money where they give their time. Therefore, it’s critically important that organizations coordinate across departments in how they cultivate *all* their supporters—time donors and financial donors. It would serve volunteer directors well to partner with their organization’s grant writers, who may not understand the role of volunteers and how best to communicate that value. Such internal education provides important opportunities to elevate the role of volunteers, as well as advocate for quality impact measures organization-wide.

Use the questions that follow as a guide to prepare a proposal and talking points on your organization's overall capacity to engage, empower and sustain volunteer resources and increase impact through strategic engagement.

Volunteer Involvement

- How does your organization determine the best way to involve volunteers in meeting its mission?
- What impact would *not* engaging volunteers have on your mission? What services wouldn't be possible? What goals wouldn't be met?
- In what specific roles does the agency involve volunteers, and are those roles developed in response to real needs of the organization and community?
- To what extent does the volunteer pool reflect the diversity of the community your organization serves?
- Does your organization engage volunteers in roles that leverage their skills and treat them as equal members of work teams? If so, how?

Organizational Commitment to Volunteer Engagement

- Is volunteer engagement articulated in your strategic plan?
- Do organizational leaders actively support and model strategic volunteer engagement?
- Is there a budget to support volunteer involvement (e.g., technology, training, equipment, recognition)? What percentage of the agency budget does it represent?
- Is there a professional dedicated to volunteer engagement on staff? What is that person's experience or qualifications? Where is that role within the organizational structure—does the level of the position reflect the resources this individual manages?
- Are volunteer engagement policies and procedures comprehensive, clear and consistently applied?

Increase Impact by Moving from Program to Strategy

- How are volunteers trained in their work and in the work of your agency?
- Do additional staff members supervise volunteers in the agency? If so, what training do they receive to prepare them to manage their unpaid staff?
- How does the organization train and develop its volunteer board of directors?



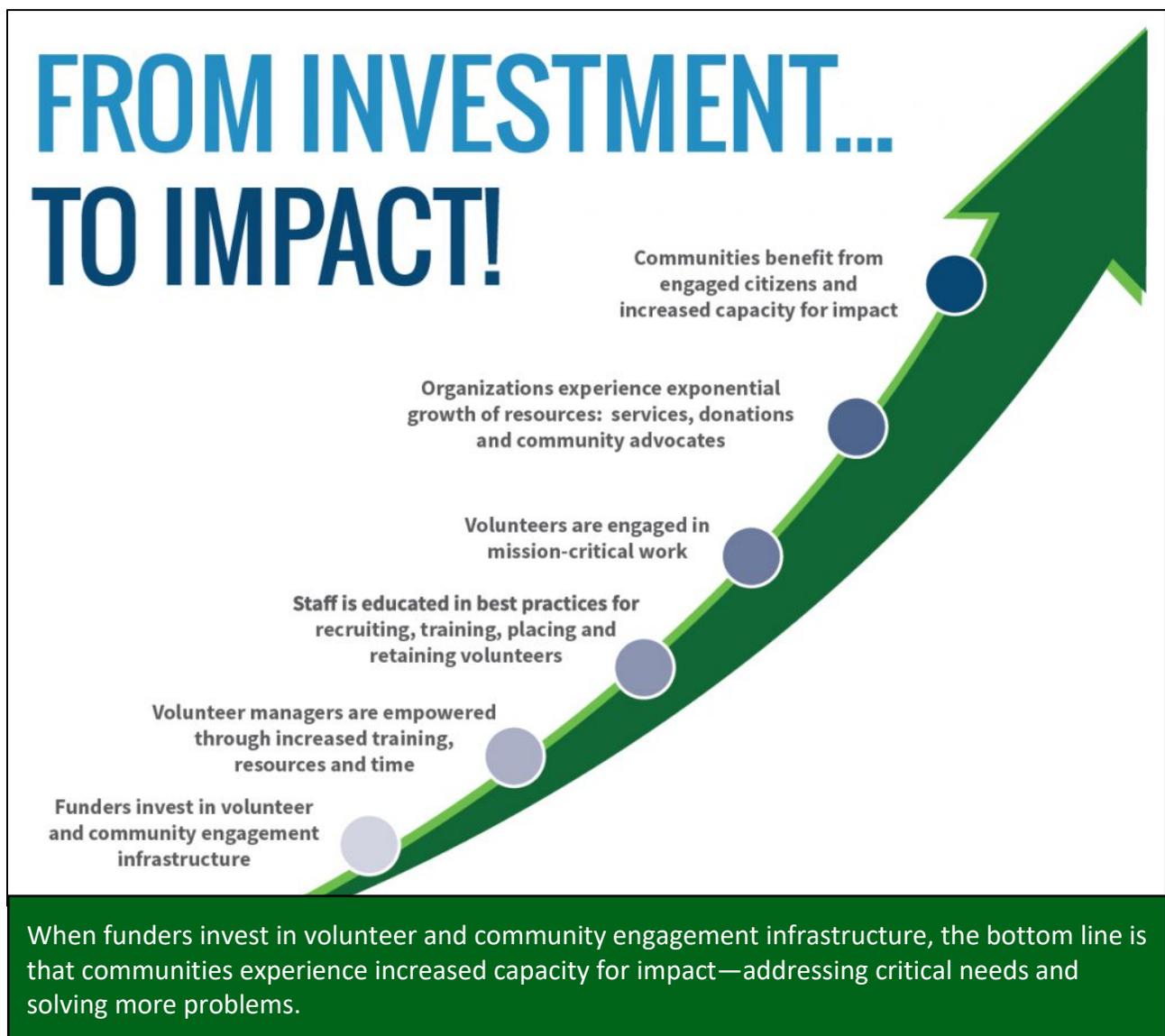
Impact and Evaluation

- How does the organization measure and communicate the overall impact of volunteer involvement?
- How many volunteers does the organization involve on an annual basis in various roles—from direct service to pro bono roles?

- What is the monetary value of the time given by volunteers annually? How does your organization determine this value?
- Is volunteer supervision a performance measure or accountability indicator for staff? Is volunteer engagement included in staff job descriptions?

Project Management in Relation to Grant Proposal

- How do volunteers enhance or support the project goals and your organization’s mission?
- How will other staff ensure that volunteers are engaged effectively and have positive experiences?
- Does the organization have a budget for volunteer resources management on this project?
- What additional training, supervision or evaluation strategies related to volunteer engagement will support this project?



Know the Research About Effective Volunteer Engagement

Compelling reasons to invest in volunteer engagement infrastructure and support include:

1. Effective volunteer engagement leverages and increases the impact of grant making.

- When engaged effectively, volunteers augment an organization's financial and in-kind resources, producing greater value for each dollar invested.
- Volunteers provide new or expanded services to increase the return on investment and add significant value to the objectives of grants received by organizations.



2. Effective volunteer engagement is linked to stronger, more effective and more efficient organizations as a whole.⁴

- All organizational capacities are significantly and markedly stronger for nonprofits with a strong volunteer engagement model.
- When organizations engage any number of volunteers well, they are significantly better led and managed as a whole.
- Organizations that fundamentally leverage volunteers and their skills towards their mission are significantly more adaptable, sustainable and capable of going to scale.
- Organizations that engage volunteers are equally as effective as their peers without volunteers, but at almost half the median budget.

3. Effective volunteer engagement occurs when there is strong organizational and community infrastructure.

- The organization's leadership (i.e., board, executive staff and funders) must consider support of the volunteer infrastructure to be as important as any other organizational resource.
- Having a strategic volunteer engagement model requires strong and well-developed human resources management practices.⁴ The ability to engage and retain increasingly diverse volunteers requires highly competent leadership.

4. Effective volunteer involvement occurs when board and staff at all levels are adequately trained.

- Training helps board members—many of whom are corporate and philanthropic leaders—and executive staff members understand that well-supported volunteers can increase an organization's service and fundraising capacity.
- Training of volunteers and of the staff who support them is vital to successful volunteer engagement models.

5. People give their money where they give their time.

- Volunteering can be an important way of evaluating an organization for future financial support, as a significant number of donors (2 in 5) volunteered at a charity before making a financial donation to that organization.²
- Half of volunteers say that volunteering leads them to give more financial support.²
- Nearly 70% of high net worth individuals give financially to the organizations with which they volunteer.⁵
- Organizations that provide robust volunteer opportunities have an edge in creating a steady donor base and in growing their overall level of financial support.
- Compared to younger volunteers, volunteers 61-70 years old (65%) are more likely to show interest in opportunities that require a specific skill set.² These same volunteers are increasing their interest in philanthropy.
- According to a 2009 study by Fidelity Charitable, volunteers give, on average, ten times as much as non-volunteers and most donate to the organizations in which they are involved.⁶



Putting Volunteer Engagement at the Core of an Organization

In 2009, Reimagining Service, a national cross-sector coalition dedicated to better understanding and promoting the power of volunteer engagement, conducted research on the state of engagement in the country. Through this research, the correlation between organizational health and sustainability and effective engagement of volunteers became clear. The term “Service Enterprise” was coined to describe an organization that fundamentally leverages volunteers and their skills to achieve its social mission. Now, Points of Light offers the opportunity to be certified as a Service Enterprise through a comprehensive training program to transform to an organization that fundamentally leverages volunteers and their skills.

Investing in strategic volunteer engagement infrastructure pays off significantly. Organizations certified as Service Enterprises have reported up to a \$6 return in volunteer value for every dollar invested in volunteer engagement).³

Research conducted by TCC Group and Deloitte demonstrates that nonprofits operating as Service Enterprises outperform peer organizations on all measures of organizational capacity, thereby allowing these nonprofits to more effectively address community needs and operate at almost half the median budget.⁴

Learn more at <http://www.pointsoflight.org/service-enterprise-initiative>

Build Your Case for Investing in Volunteer Engagement

Building a case for investing in volunteer engagement at your organization lays a foundation for future funding. These three steps will ensure you present a strong and compelling case to potential funders about the value and return on investing in your organization's volunteer engagement infrastructure and strategy.

Step 1. Prepare

Preparation is vital to making a clear and compelling case for support. Use the key questions below to guide your preparation.

- What problem or need is does your organization work to resolve or address?
- Who or what is affected by this challenge?
- How can volunteer involvement help to address the problem? What skills or talents would build your capacity to address these challenges?
- How are you already engaging volunteers to address some of these needs?
- How are volunteers already making an impact on this issue? What are the specific benefits of engaging volunteers in increased or different ways? Impacts and benefits could include increased public awareness, more people served, better services being delivered, dollars raised through fundraising, new skills within the organization, stronger staff and more.
- How is your organization unique in addressing the problem? How is your organization unique in the ways it engages the community as partners in addressing these challenges?
- What is the desired outcome of this increased effort? What difference will new or more volunteers be able to make? (For example, how many people will be reached? Programs delivered? How will the clients benefit? How much funds will be raised?)
- What will it cost to reach the desired outcome? Consider budget for both cash expenses and donated resources, whether people, funds or in-kind services.
- Which donor(s) or funder(s) will you ask for support and why? Are they funders that already have interest in volunteer engagement or capacity building initiatives? How will each prospective donor or funder benefit from giving you support.

Financial resources are limited, yet community needs continue to rise. We must steward well the resources we have and develop creative, new ways to tap the abundant resource of skills and passion around us. Supporting volunteer engagement infrastructure gives funders the “multiplier effect!” Funders multiply their investment by helping organizations serve more clients, raise more funds and deliver more programs by engaging volunteers to serve the mission.

Adapted from *Leading the Way to Successful Volunteer Involvement*, by Betty Stallings.

Seven Key Messages About Strategic Volunteer Engagement

Seven key messages about strategic volunteer engagement in nonprofit organizations emerge from recent research on the topic. Select some of these messages and incorporate them wherever possible into your case statement and talking points.

1

For foundations and corporations, effective volunteer engagement leverages and improves grant making and adds value.

- When engaged effectively, volunteers augment an organization's financial and in-kind resources, producing greater value for each dollar invested.
- Volunteers can provide new or expanded services to increase the return on investment and add significant value to the objectives of a grant.
- Citizen engagement can be a key indicator of the health of both the nonprofit sector and individual organizations. Knowing what to look for in assessing how a nonprofit manages its volunteer resources provides grant makers and businesses with another observation and decision-making tool.

2

For companies, effective volunteer engagement can support their business objectives and ensure a high-impact experience for their corporate volunteers.

- Employee volunteer involvement builds morale and loyalty and provides opportunities for employees to share and develop their skills and expertise.
- Supporting volunteering can help a company leverage and align its community relations, public affairs, and financial contributions to establish (or reinforce) a brand identity, company loyalty and community goodwill.
- Helping to build nonprofit capacity in engaging volunteers is an important way that businesses can generate societal wealth—creating jobs, respecting the environment and making other lasting contributions to the community.

3

For organizations, effective volunteer engagement strengthens their ability to meet critical needs and deliver services.

- Strategically designed volunteer opportunities and well supported volunteers enhance a nonprofit's community reputation for their ability to meet critical needs.
- Volunteers are not "free," but investing in robust and strategic volunteer engagement infrastructure pays off significantly (e.g., organizations certified as Service Enterprises have reported a \$6 return in volunteer value for every dollar invested).
- Increasing the diversity of who volunteers and how they volunteer provides organizations with increased access to a broader range of perspectives, skills and resources.
- Volunteers are donors, too. Volunteers are nearly twice as likely to donate to charity as non-volunteers.

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Effective volunteer engagement is linked to stronger, more sustainable and more efficient organizations as a whole.

- All organizational capacities are significantly stronger for nonprofits with an effective volunteer engagement infrastructure.
- Organizations that fundamentally leverage volunteers and their skills towards accomplishing their mission are significantly more adaptable, sustainable and capable of going to scale.
- Organizations that engage volunteers are equally as effective as their peers without volunteers, but at almost half the median budget.

5

Effective volunteer engagement occurs when there is strong organizational and community infrastructure.

- The organization's leadership (i.e., board, executive staff and funders) must consider support of the volunteer infrastructure to be as important as any other organizational resource.
- Having a strategic volunteer engagement model requires strong and well-developed human resources management practices. The ability to engage and retain increasingly diverse volunteers requires highly competent leadership.

6

Effective volunteer involvement occurs when staff and board members are trained and supported.

- Corporate and community volunteers who understand how to work with a nonprofit and what to expect in return are more willing to share their expertise and time.
- Training helps board members—many of whom are corporate and philanthropic leaders—and executive staff members to understand that well-supported volunteers can increase an organization's service and fundraising capacity.
- Training of volunteers and of the staff who support them is vital to successful volunteer engagement models.

7

Effective volunteer involvement contributes to maintaining a civil society.

- Grant makers, government and business can meet their community involvement goals by supporting the structures and systems that enable more effective volunteering.
- When people know how to support their community, when it is easy for them to get involved, and when their experience is meaningful, they are more likely to continue volunteering.

Step 2. Construct a Case Statement

After answering the key questions, use those responses to craft a case statement. A case statement is a document that communicates the rationale, need, focus and vision of what will be different as a result of an initiative for which you are seeking funding. A statement ensures consistency in promoting an initiative and helps to garner support. It can be used to develop speaking points, print materials and proposals to share with prospective funders.



When crafting your case statement, be specific about your strengths, vision and needs, explaining how leveraging volunteer engagement will increase your impact. Encourage funders to examine your organization's ability to steward not only its financial resources, but its human resources as well. Share stories of how volunteers are already effectively building your capacity and increasing your organization's impact on the community, the environment and/or the world.

Furthermore, incorporate compelling messages about the value of investing in strategic volunteer engagement. For the most recent research on volunteer engagement, see page 13 or visit www.leightyfoundation.org/volunteer-engagement/research/.

Case Statement Template

Background (how or why the initiative is being developed)

Connection (to mission and vision)

Stakeholders (who is involved in, supporting and/or benefiting from the initiative)

Examples (of existing exemplary programs and services within the organization)

Your Case Statement

Talking Points

Elevator Speech

Adapted from VQ Volunteer Strategies' *Case Statement for Volunteer Engagement*.

Step 3. Present your Case

When crafting your case statement, be specific about your vision and your strengths, and explain what you need to help you accomplish your vision. To make your case for financial support of volunteer involvement credible, follow these two essential rules.

1. DON'T approach funders with a budget to support the infrastructure of running a volunteer program.

- Infrastructure supports your organization, not your clients. Focusing on the internal needs is the biggest mistake in fundraising!
- Speaking of a “volunteer program” isolates community participation into a special project, possibly viewed in competition with more client-centered “programs.” Remember, you would not refer to an “employee program,” would you?

An Ineffective Ask:

“We need money to fund the position of a volunteer director so that the program runs more smoothly and efficiently and our volunteers have a more organized and successful experience.”

Probable Funder Response:

“How are you different than any other organization that would like a volunteer director? What difference would it make in carrying out your mission?”

2. DO request funding that will empower volunteers to expand the reach of your mission.

- Whatever your mission—ending hunger, improving the environment, enabling seniors to live independently—funders are more likely to support a proposal that identifies that goal.

An Effective Ask:

“Divorce, alcoholism, drug abuse and depression are frequently associated with those who must care for seriously ill children. We are looking for funds to extend our support to approximately 1,300 families in our region who care for a child with a serious illness. Expanding the number of community volunteers (more targeted recruitment) and strengthening their skills (formal training) to provide respite services will allow us to increase and enhance our overall service to these families.”

Probable Funder Response:

“We share your interest in extending assistance to additional families with a seriously ill child and will consider your request of maximizing the support through service provided by an increased number of effectively trained volunteers.”

Adapted from *Leading the Way to Successful Volunteer Involvement*, by Betty Stallings.

Talking Points for Developing a Funder Partnership

“We are leveraging resources when engaging volunteers.”

Think of all the ways that supporting volunteers in your organization will provide leveraging opportunities:

- Donated time by many people will attract other resources, including matched gifts and word-of-mouth publicity.
- Expanded services (for example, volunteers can provide services during hours when many employees might not work).
- Successful innovative ideas shared with others providing a similar service. Offer to write up your findings and share with those who could adapt your techniques.

“All funded programs need community oversight.”

Any organization that receives private donations or public support is truly owned by the community. Therefore, engaging volunteers from the community in the effort makes a great deal of sense, both as watchdogs monitoring use of the money and as individuals who can expand the services.

“Volunteers extend our services beyond what our budget could buy.”

Always avoid saying “volunteers save us money.” In most cases, volunteers are not actually saving the organization money as the organization could not have spent funds they didn’t have. The reality is that volunteers expand the budget and extend the services of the organization. If we perpetuate the thought that volunteers save organizations money, we are also implying that, if we all had the funds we needed, volunteers would be expendable. This is not true because volunteers are more valuable than the cost involved in supporting them.

“The return on investment (ROI) with volunteers is tremendous when they are strategically deployed and well managed.”

Be confident that the investment of dollars and time to support volunteers provides a significant return to the organization. ROI is increasingly of great interest to private and public funders. While it is difficult to put an exact value on the time a volunteer mentors a child or advocates for a clean environment, we can still speak in terms of the outcomes and impact of the work of volunteers. For example:

- Last year, our volunteer tutors prepared 25 low income, high-risk young people for successful entrance into a junior college.
- With the organized support of regular volunteer visits, we have successfully helped 50 people over age 85 to stay in their homes independently for a longer period of time than they could before.
- A team of pro bono volunteers skilled in software development upgraded our existing software and developed new report formats so that we now can track client service benchmarks clearly.

“Volunteers are often financial donors, too.”

According to 2009 research, high net-worth donor volunteers give, on average, ten times as much as non-volunteers⁶ and most donate to the organizations in which they are involved. Nearly half of the wealthy donors interviewed give financially to most of the organizations where they volunteer.

Adapted from [Leading the Way to Successful Volunteer Involvement](#), by Betty Stallings.

Preparing to Respond to Possible Funder Objections

You may need to educate a prospective funder about the value of volunteers and their abilities. Therefore, before you make your funding request, consider all the objections, or at least concerns, a donor or funder might have when deciding whether to give you money. Then, prepare your responses. Here is an example:

Donor Objection: “My experience is that volunteers are not reliable and you might find yourself investing more in them than they return in service to the organization.”

Potential Response: “I am sorry that you have had that experience with volunteers. In our organization, we do a very thorough job of selecting the right volunteers for positions available, hold volunteers accountable and treat them as partners in our important mission. We have had remarkable success with volunteers carrying out the commitment they pledge to us. We hold re-commitment discussions with volunteers every quarter so that we can detect any dissatisfaction or needs for additional training or a change in position.”

What are the potential objections you anticipate hearing in response to your request for funds to support volunteer engagement? How will you respond?

Possible Donor Objections	Your Potential Response

Adapted from *Leading the Way to Successful Volunteer Involvement*, by Betty Stallings.

Track and Share Results

Volunteers today are motivated by the chance to do meaningful work that makes a difference. Of course, measuring volunteer impact is not only valuable for volunteers. Understanding the impact of volunteer involvement can help improve programs, build staff buy-in for their engagement efforts, and communicate to funders, donors and the larger community how the organization is stewarding its resources overall.

Most organizations continue to measure volunteer contributions simply by counting the number of hours volunteers engage. Acknowledging the dedication and commitment of volunteers can be valuable. But counting hours is limiting at best. More hours does not necessarily translate to more impact, nor does it promote efficiency. While hours may need to be tracked for grant reporting requirements, there is value in getting beyond hours alone.

Getting from Hours to Outcomes

Sharing the impact of volunteer involvement is a compelling and vital part of making the case to funders for investing in volunteer engagement. Here are some steps and tools to shift your measurement beyond hours alone.

- Translate hours to **financial value**, using resources such as the annual value of volunteer time published by the Independent Sector or Bureau of Labor Statistics' information on comparable hourly values for related paid positions.
- Calculate your **Return on Volunteer Investment (ROVI)** by considering not only the value of the volunteer talent but also the amount of time and money that the organization invests in recruiting, training, supporting, supervising and recognizing volunteers. You can find a Return on Volunteer Investment (ROVI) calculator through [Verified Volunteers](#).

Track the **outcomes** of volunteer involvement. Outcomes-based evaluation focuses on tracking and measuring the difference that volunteers make in such terms as people reached, trees planted, books distributed, improved school performance by students being tutored, health screenings conducted, legislation passed and more. Measuring outcomes in these terms tells the story of the vital roles that volunteers play in an organization and in the community and can truly be the tipping point in garnering funder support.



Adapted from [Enhancing the Volunteer Lifecycle](#), by Beth Steinhorn, an e-book published by Verified Volunteers.

Resources

Online Resources

The literature of the nonprofit sector has ample materials related to volunteerism and volunteer engagement. While this is not meant to serve as an exhaustive list, the following organizations offer additional research and information.

America's Service Commissions

statecommissions.org

Colorado Nonprofit Association

coloradononprofits.org

Corporation for National and Community Service

nationalservice.gov

Energize, Inc.

energizeinc.com

Grantmakers for Effective Organizations

geofunders.org

Independent Sector

independentsector.org

The Leighty Foundation

leightyfoundation.org

National Alliance for Volunteer Engagement

allianceforengagement.org

Points of Light

pointsoflight.org

Verified Volunteers

verifiedvolunteers.com

Training and Certification in Volunteer Engagement

Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration (CCVA)

www.cvacert.org

Everyone Ready® Volunteer Management Skill-Building Program

EveryoneReady.info

Points of Light - Service Enterprise

pointsoflight.org/service-enterprise-initiative

Training Busy Staff to Succeed with Volunteers: The 55-Minute Staff Training Series 5-Minute Training Series, by Betty Stallings
energizeinc.com/store/training_busy_staff_succeed_volunteers_complete_set

Consultants Specializing in Volunteer-Funder Partnerships

Adisa

Adisagroup.com

VQ Volunteer Strategies

Vqstrategies.com

Books/Publications

Ellis, Susan J., [*From the Top Down The Executive Role in Successful Volunteer Involvement*](#), 3rd Edition. 2010.

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The newly updated “Volunteer Engagement” section of our website, www.leightyfoundation.org, has valuable resources for funders and grantees.

You’ll find information and resources on topics such as:

- Why Invest in Volunteer Engagement?
 - Current Research and Implications
 - Building the Case for Funder Partnerships
 - Options for Funder Support
 - Successful Models and Case Studies
 - How to Assess Grantees’ Organizational Capacity and Readiness
- ... and more!



You can also view and download a free copy of our resource, *The Funder’s Guide to Investing in Volunteer Engagement*



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