

Build a Successful Volunteer Program to Drive Growth and Recovery



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In challenging times, using volunteers gives communities the power to both increase meaningful engagement with residents and discover creative ways to meet expanding needs for local government services with limited resources. The successful implementation of volunteer programs can accomplish these dual goals, as many recent local government initiatives have shown. Yet there is an overall lack of focus on utilizing volunteerism, not only to meet service needs but also as a strategy for positive citizen engagement. This report describes how communities can establish a management plan to incorporate and engage volunteers in local government.

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Build a Successful Volunteer Program to Drive Growth and Recovery

In times of both security and challenge, cities can tap into a reservoir of human capital—volunteers—to deliver services and drive economic recovery and growth. This increased desire to leverage volunteers toward achieving strategic objectives in local municipalities is being driven by the simultaneous reduction in funds and tax base, a new level of interest in national volunteerism, and the opportunity to build an engaged citizenry, which can lead to sustainable and creative solutions. Yet, there is an overall lack of focus on utilizing volunteerism as a strategy for positive citizen engagement. This report:

- highlights why the climate is right for service as a strategy for cities
- describes different types of volunteers and how they are best engaged
- showcases the basics for developing an effective volunteer management program
- explores model initiatives in local governments.

Cities are at the nexus point between citizens and change. Those that succeed will leverage volunteers to deliver solutions in times of uncertainty. The truly innovative will reinvent citizen service as a fundamental part of the city fabric. It will mean a new day for the power of creative human capital, and this ignition of human spirit could be a spark that revives growth and stability in U.S. cities.

Service as a strategy

Cities are in a bind. The National League of Cities report on City Fiscal Conditions in 2009 noted that 9 out of 10 cities face significant shortfalls in the coming year.¹ Yet despite financial conditions, cities must maintain core programs and respond to citizens' pressing needs. In addition, a priority for many city leaders is to build social capital within their jurisdictions and help citizens positively connect to government—an especially difficult challenge during economic downturn.

Volunteerism provides a key way to support both of these goals.

Michelle Nunn is the CEO of Points of Light Institute and Co-Founder of HandsOn Network. She was a Kellogg National Fellow and has an MPA from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She serves on the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation, is a co-convenor of the ServiceNation coalition, and serves as a board member of All for Good. For the third consecutive year, The Non-Profit Times has named Nunn to its annual "Power and Influence Top 50" list of change agents from the nonprofit sector.

Specifically, volunteers can:

- bring scale to strapped programs
- enhance city identity
- lead activities that drive family and community recovery
- build a sense of shared purpose and collective action across neighborhoods and politics.

Volunteer action is the energy needed to green cities, help children succeed academically, and invent next-generation creative economies that will sustain communities.

Beyond enhancing the face of a city, volunteerism keeps people connected and engaged in their community. This is critical in maintaining a robust and vibrant population. An ongoing study conducted by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation entitled “Soul of the Community” explores what brings people to a community and what makes them stay. Critical to this discussion is the finding of “a significant relationship between people’s passion and loyalty for their community and local economic growth.”² In tangible and intangible ways, municipal volunteer programs can support the broader policy goals of a city.

For example, in Phoenix, Arizona, the Blight Busters program links neighborhood volunteers with training and tools to eliminate graffiti, conduct clean-up projects, and report code violations. Blight Busters works with the city’s Neighborhood Services Department to extend the reach of code inspectors, police officers, and other law enforcement officials. Similar programs in other cities stretch the municipal dollar and invest citizens in the safety and health of their own communities.

Similarly, the H1N1 outbreak stretched resources for schools and public health departments. When the Health Department in Nashville, Tennessee, was faced with the need to conduct mass inoculations, officials turned to a partnership with the local volunteer action center, HandsOn Nashville. Together, they trained 4,000 point-of-dispensing volunteers to assist with school immunization clinics and community education efforts. With volunteers, the department can scale service

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quickly and rely on residents who have familiarity with their neighbors and cultural competence to support mass dispensing in multicultural communities.

Volunteer-municipal partnerships often play a critical role in economic development and recovery. To spur small business development, the City of Dublin, Ohio, established the Dublin Entrepreneurial Center, where potential business owners can find support for strategic planning and leasing assistance. Skilled volunteers staff the center, overseeing events aimed at job creation and economic growth.

Smart, strategic activation of volunteers in service can help managers and cities bring to life platform priorities such as education, sustainability, and economic growth. Volunteers help local government stretch shrinking dollars and make real-life connections with citizens.

Key issues in local government

City and county leaders are on the front lines with both citizens and solutions.

Issues that most jurisdictions are facing include:

- Budget cuts or flattening against rising needs
- Need to sustain services through layoffs and hiring freezes
- Losses of talent to other sectors and difficulties with talent acquisition
- Development of strategies for innovation in service delivery
- Need to maintain or improve transparency
- Lack of connection with citizens.

Many civic leaders believe “that volunteering involves activities solely for nonprofit organizations. . . . This is too narrow a view. In fact, a very large percentage of American volunteers [already] assist government units at the local, county, state and national levels.”³ Everyone is aware of volunteer fire departments, but what about volunteer engagement in public libraries, local parks, homeless shelters, and jails? What about neighborhood watches, community policing, and committees and councils that are being utilized? Volunteerism is occurring across all jurisdictions, yet the capacity to leverage this human capital is not always fully tapped.

In reality and in spirit, under the management and guidance of staff and, when relevant, in partnership with local nonprofit organizations, service can be a vital element of a recovery strategy. Imagine what can transpire when a local government:

- Engages in an increased community conversation about the role of service in filling gaps, delivering critical city programs, and elevating case management for those affected by job loss, and then recruits volunteers for the top five opportunities resulting from the discussion.

- Launches a City of Service effort and joins a movement of more than 80 cities nationwide that are charting a course that puts service at the center of city planning and management.
- Galvanizes skilled service by calling on corporate and university communities to come together to identify what is needed to help get more people back to work and self-sufficiency—and develops volunteer position descriptions to help meet these needs.

Consider the case of the City of Palm Bay, Florida. To coincide with its fiftieth anniversary, the city developed a new program to better connect the public to through civic engagement. The Palm Bay Volunteer Service Corps (PBVSC) program coordinates efforts to allow volunteer participation, input, and involvement in the daily operation of the city's departments (see palmbayflorida.org/hr/job/volunteer.html). The corps has developed hundreds of short- and long-term volunteer positions that directly support the work of city agencies without cannibalizing current jobs.

Through building community partnerships to develop programs that address key current issues, the possibilities of a municipal volunteer strategy to address the issues your city is facing are endless.

The climate is right

Although the call to serve one's community has always been enveloped in American history, recent national and international events have drawn greater attention to volunteerism, and the need for the continuity and increase in service. From the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s to the VISTAs of the 1960s to the Commission on National and Community Service and USA Freedom Corps of the 1990s and early 2000s, federal programs have leveraged individual efforts and created local impact for almost a century.

The recent bipartisan passage of the 2009 Serve America Act, the emergence of the millennial generation, and the retirement of baby boomers have further launched service as a way to share both burden and solution to community needs. This is being embraced on a scale never before attempted in America, and leading organizations such as the Corporation for National and Community Service, HandsOn Network, AARP, Service Nation, Cities of Service, and governments of all sizes are defining it swiftly.

Furthermore, cities and communities are realizing the lasting and overall benefits of volunteerism and citizen engagement. Research has established clear findings on the health benefits of volunteerism, incorporating overall levels of engagement as clear indicators of community satisfaction.

Levels of civic engagement are an indicator of a community's interconnectedness, of the sense of ownership felt by residents, of a city's capacity to learn and adapt to serve the community, and of levels of social capital. Social capital is the networks, relationships, communication, and trust between people that contributes to social cohesion. Increased social capital has a positive impact on reported quality of life, access to economic and social opportunities, and even mental and physical health.⁴

Some critical trends make this a particularly good time to invest in volunteer activation.

Serve America Act

The Serve America Act reauthorizes the Corporation for National and Community Service and its programs through 2014. The bill includes significant provisions advancing the Obama administration's goals for national service, including:

- Dramatic expansion of service opportunities for Americans of all ages, setting a path for increasing the number of AmeriCorps members to 250,000 by 2017
- A Social Innovation Fund pilot program to provide seed money and scale up innovative and evidence-based programs that leverage private and foundation capital to meet major social challenges
- Expansion of eligibility for the Senior Companion and Foster Grandparent programs
- Simplification of AmeriCorps program management, including the availability of fixed amount grants
- Increase in the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award
- Strengthening of agency management to support expansion.

Employee volunteerism is not just for the private sector. Some municipalities have established employee volunteer programs for their public employees.

Rise of workplace volunteerism

The concept of corporate citizenship—the belief that companies have an obligation to actively maintain the health and well-being of the communities in which they do business—has formally existed in the United States since the early 1950s. However, over the past two decades, a growing number of business leaders have come to view corporate citizenship, including volunteerism, as not just “the right thing to do,” but as a key business imperative that can generate value for the company, its employees, and the community. Leading corporations have taken local and national approaches to support cities in their efforts.

Corporations have found that corporate responsibility and philanthropy is more than courtesy; it is good business. The emergence of Corporate Volunteer Councils in many metropolitan areas enabled greater visibility of these efforts to support and

advocate for such service. Often cited as beneficial for team building and morale, corporate service outreach is a method used by the business sector to build reputation, extend brand, and appeal to the emerging millennial generation in the workforce.

Employee volunteerism is not just for the private sector, however. Municipalities such as Plano, Texas, have established employee volunteer programs for their public employees. Plano's Workplace C.A.R.E.S. Program (City Advocates Recruiting Employees into Service) began in 1998 as a way to assist employees in connecting with service in the community. Since then, the internal committee that coordinates this effort reports that 100 volunteers have given more than 4,000 hours of service to the community, contributing to the program's purpose, which helps to "increase employee morale, build leadership skills, and increase collaboration between city departments."⁵

Cities of Service movement

Cities of Service (citiesofservice.org) is a bipartisan coalition of the mayors of large and small cities from across America who are working together to engage citizens to address the great challenges of our time. Founded in New York City in September 2009, and under the championship of Mayor Bloomberg, the coalition and its member cities are finding new and innovative ways to harness the power of volunteers to help solve pressing local challenges. Since its launch in September 2009, the coalition has grown from 17 founding mayors to more than 90 mayors representing more than 45 million Americans across the nation. Each city has pledged to lead multi-year efforts to accomplish the following:

- Develop a comprehensive service plan and a coordinated strategy focused on matching volunteers and established community partners to the areas of greatest local need
- Advance strategies and best practices that accelerate the service movement and produce measurable results
- Encourage others to join this national effort to engage citizens
- Ensure that the voices of cities are heard in federal legislative, policy, and program discussions related to service.

Established models of success

Several established program models showcase the potential of civic efforts to address city needs largely through a volunteer workforce.

Teach for America Teach for America recruits outstanding recent college graduates from all backgrounds and career interests to commit to teach for two years in urban and rural public schools in low-income communities. Pushing the

teachers and students to go beyond traditional expectations, Teach for America shows that everyday citizens have the power to address educational inequities.⁶

VITA The VITA Program utilizes volunteers to provide free tax help to low- to moderate-income people, as well as the elderly and military personnel, tapping the power of volunteers to economically empower individuals.⁷

Project Homeless Connect Project Homeless Connect, founded under the direction of Mayor Gavin Newsom of San Francisco, California, builds partnerships between government agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector to provide a one-stop shop of health and human services for homeless San Franciscans, offered every two months. Services include dental and eye care, food, HIV testing, hygiene products, medical and mental health care, legal advice, voice mail and much more and showcase the power of partnerships across sectors to address human needs in an efficient effective manner.⁸

Who volunteers?

The most comprehensive resource for statistics and trends in service is tracked by the Corporation for National and Community in Service in their Volunteering in America report. National trends, including state and local statistics are summarized for gauging levels of involvement through service. From their research and collections of data, we know that volunteer service is on a steady increase across the country. Among their key findings summary for 2009 are the following:

- In 2008, 61.8 million Americans—or 26.4 percent of the adult population—contributed 8 billion hours of volunteer service worth \$162 billion, using Independent Sector’s 2008 estimate of the dollar value of a volunteer hour (\$20.25).
- Despite the challenges of a tough economic situation, the volunteering rate held steady between 2007 and 2008, while the number of volunteers slightly increased by about one million.
- Over 441,000 more young adults (age 16–24) volunteered in 2008 than 2007, representing an increase from about 7.8 million to more than 8.2 million.
- Neighborhood engagement levels have risen sharply since 2007, with a 31 percent increase in the number of people who worked with their neighbors to fix a community problem and a 17 percent increase in the number of people who attended community meetings.⁹

Communities will likely engage some key types of volunteers: baby boomers, millennials, and companies and congregations. Working successfully with each group requires a tailored approach, as described in the following sections. See Appendix A for sample descriptions of other categories of community volunteers, both ongoing and short term.

Baby boomers

Boomer engagement is currently redefining what volunteer engagement will look like in the near and long-term future. Just as baby boomers redefined societal norms in culture, family, and the workplace, so will they redefine service. Some trends indicate that boomers are seeking to volunteer as a continuation of career paths—as seamless transitions or pathways into new careers—emphasizing leadership and change.¹⁰ The 77 million members of this generation have been “far less civically engaged than the Greatest Generation at every stage to date,” and trends indicate that they are even rejecting the traditional term “volunteer.”¹¹

Organizations that rely on volunteerism to meet service delivery are currently addressing the need for greater creativity and emphasis on matching the baby boomer profile to their service opportunities. To accomplish this, the way to engage this generation will have to undergo a paradigm shift, utilizing greater feedback, identification of needs, and service delivery in new, creative ways. “The significance of volunteer administrators creating a well-orchestrated match between the volunteers’ interests, skills, and abilities and a volunteer position will be vital. Baby boomers will not be satisfied with fulfilling a role based solely on the needs defined by the organization. They will be seeking activities that utilize their talents and desire to make a difference.”¹²

Millennials

Contrary to baby boomers, the millennial generation is the first to be “required” to volunteer through service-learning in schools and community groups. Studies are showing that as this generation is beginning to enter the workforce, they are volunteering in record numbers, demanding that it be a part of corporate culture and valuing it at a greater pace than the Greatest Generation did some 60 years ago.¹³ Research consistently indicates this expectation of service. The “increase among millennials represented all of last year’s gain in volunteerism; other generations combined showed no increase in participation levels.”¹⁴

How service is delivered, however, is also different to this generation than what conventional wisdom defines as volunteerism. This generation prefers to serve in less formal ways, as a method or pathway to increased social engagement, and as a means to the end of achieving knowledge about how their service meets a greater, universal good. Volunteer opportunities must be designed with a clear outcome, team orientation, apparent impact, and tie-in with a cause.

Companies and congregations

Corporate volunteers and other groups joining together in service, such as congregations, are eager to serve and make a difference—while also building group morale and spirit. These volunteers, as they are typically engaging in larger groups,

Duties performed by a volunteer coordinator

Project management

- Identify of potential community projects, working with group on project selection
- Coordinate all logistics concerning the volunteer projects, including project site inspection
- Communicate with staff from the partnering department or agency
- Acquire all project materials
- Lead orientation for volunteers on-site
- Coordinate related logistics, including arrangements for food, transportation, and pre- or post-event celebration (cost typically incurred by volunteering group)
- Assist with internal recruitment efforts, which may include an on-site presentation at the company.

Team leadership on the day of service

- Provide one or more organizational representative throughout service projects to assist with coordination and logistics.

Post-event evaluation

- Administer evaluations of volunteers' experience, as well as assess impact of service
- Compile all results in an event summary document.

Marketing and public relations

- Highlight project or group as a feature segment in the organization's newsletter or Web site
- Assist with media relations if requested.

Ongoing community involvement

- Lead orientation at the company/congregation following the project for employees/members interested in volunteering on their own.

often appreciate more hands-on assistance from a volunteer coordinator or staff member to guide the process. See the sidebar on the following page for a list of typical responsibilities of a volunteer coordinator.

Volunteer expectations

Effective volunteer management has three critical pieces. First, the organization planning to engage volunteers needs to know what it wants to accomplish with them and develop a plan. This involves organization-wide planning and support, development of meaningful service opportunities, and consensus on clear volunteer expectations. Second, the organization must have the program pieces in place to

ensure the plan can be implemented. These pieces include a positive on-boarding process via orientation and training, logistics planning, ongoing communication, and volunteer leadership engagement. Third, the organization needs to add the finishing touches such as providing growth and development opportunities, recognizing volunteers, and clarifying impact. Such a plan will set the program apart from other volunteer opportunities.

If effective volunteer management practices are implemented, volunteers will continue to serve the community and, most important, become committed and lifelong active citizens. Successful volunteer programs:

- Are supported and understood organization-wide
- Are planned beyond the short term
- Have specific, measurable goals that are tracked
- Ensure volunteer management is a staff member's job and is linked to performance
- Create pathways for deepening volunteer engagement over time.

The volunteer assignment or job function must be clearly defined. See Appendix B for a sample worksheet for use in defining each assignment. This type of document serves both the organization and the volunteer, clearly defining an expected scope of duties. Without an expected scope of duties, often issues with a volunteer's performance or the organization's management of a volunteer cannot be addressed. Further, this description clarifies a volunteer's role versus a paid staff member's role, setting up appropriate expectations among staff and community members. Most programs are set up to enable volunteers to support, not supplant, staff; therefore, delineating roles adds to an overall picture for appropriate labor division.

Without an expected scope of duties, often issues with a volunteer's performance or the organization's management of a volunteer cannot be addressed.

Before and during a volunteer's tenure, there should be a plan to set up a volunteer for success, ensuring the proper information and training is in place for a volunteer's role. Beyond the volunteer task at hand, it is beneficial to consider what opportunities and benefits will be available to the volunteer during his or her experience. Will any new skills be gained by the volunteer? Is there a formal or informal certification level for the knowledge gained as a result of such service? Should the organization open CPR training or conduct a specialized training class for volunteers?

Volunteers often seek out opportunities that will benefit their future careers or enhance their current knowledge, skills, and abilities. In Dublin, Ohio, the

foundation of the service program is “Learn. Serve. Engage.” There is an emphasis the learn-and-serve philosophy, focusing on local government learning.¹⁴ For example, parks volunteerism is often coupled with nature education by field staff before, during, or after the volunteer assignment. Special event volunteers, if not offered a separate orientation session, are provided fact sheets about how events are funded, what role the city and various partners play in event production, and how citizens play a critical role in their success. Orientation checklists are provided to each city office utilizing office volunteers, helping to ensure an overall view of departmental relationships as well as the city’s core values and leadership philosophy. Last, in youth volunteerism, special emphasis is paid to integrating learning about forms of local government and local government careers.

Program planning basics

An effective volunteer engagement program must be approached from the perspectives of the organization, the population served, and the volunteer. Moving from the outward interests of these constituents and focusing in on the overlap of needs can create the perfect volunteer position—one that serves the organization and the community, as well as the volunteer.

The most successful volunteer programs adopt service as a value throughout the organization, truly breeding a culture of volunteerism. To be transformative, successful volunteer management programs must be elevated and prioritized as critical to meeting the overall mission and vision of the organization. Cities or counties that are not at this level yet should start small and develop relevant volunteer projects that add value to the bottom line. A program that begins slowly can ultimately be built into an infrastructure for maximum effectiveness. The ultimate goal of the volunteer coordinator or manager is to create a strategy for volunteer efforts and find staff or resources to run the volunteer program over time. For more ideas and resources regarding volunteer management, see the list of additional resources at the end of this report, as well as the program planning checklist in Appendix C.

Identifying a champion

Having an officer, leader, or volunteer management professional in place to advocate for the volunteer movement is critical for institutionalizing and establishing city-wide implementation. For example, Virginia Beach, Virginia, established a decentralized volunteer resources program in 1978. In addition to the city-wide coordination of development of, recruitment for, and statistical/informational analysis of volunteerism, the work group is responsible for providing a “forum for the discussion of volunteerism and related topics.”

The director's office is charged with the following primary responsibilities, enabling the city to have a topic expert in a formal role.

- Promotes and recognizes volunteer involvement throughout city government and to the community at large
- Advocates for volunteer resource managers and volunteer involvement
- Fosters collaboration with community organizations; supports projects related to volunteer involvement
- Serves as the "voice of volunteerism" for the city.¹⁵

Measuring volunteer impact

The most often cited measure of volunteer programs tends to be that x number of volunteers gave y hours and that time spared the organization adds up to z dollars. Although those numbers show an important perspective, other key indicators of volunteer program efforts should be given careful thought.

For example, in February 2010 the City of Dublin, Ohio, embarked on a project at all departmental levels to inventory programming efforts and further integrate performance measures. In doing so, their volunteer resources department established key performance measures, as shown in Table 1. Establishing such outcomes helps to align a key focus to financial stewardship, promotes development of programs in the right ways for the right reasons, and enables easier reporting of outputs and outcomes.

Basic expectations of volunteers

- To be provided with all necessary information, including the time and place where they should report
- To know and be known by their key contacts
- To receive a written volunteer description outlining the details of the volunteer role so the organization and volunteer are both clear on responsibilities and expectations
- To be oriented on the overall goals and project, as well as specifics of the volunteer position
- To be provided with any required training to help perform responsibilities effectively now and in the future
- To be given periodic feedback and guidance sessions to help evaluate effectiveness and to ensure they are fulfilling their responsibilities
- To understand the impact of their service on addressing immediate and bigger picture needs.

Table 1 Key performance measures, by focus

Focus	Measurements
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cost per volunteer managed ▪ Dollar value of a volunteer hour ▪ Estimated dollar value of total volunteer activity
Operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Percentage of city programs utilizing volunteer services ▪ Volunteer retention rate (by program) ▪ Average number of hours served per volunteer ▪ Full-time year round job equivalent ▪ Percentage of juveniles and adults completing court-appointed service who are retained as volunteers
Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Percentage of citizens who rate volunteer opportunities as good or excellent ▪ Percentage of volunteers very satisfied or satisfied with their overall volunteer experience ▪ Percentage of supervisors very satisfied or satisfied with their overall volunteer experience
Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Percentage of employees receiving volunteer supervision training ▪ Percentage of employees successfully completing volunteer supervision training ▪ Percentage of employees who are satisfied with their job (strongly agree or somewhat agree) ▪ Percentage of employees who rate the city's support of continual learning and development as excellent or good

Source: City of Dublin, Volunteer Resources, Dublin, OH, USA.

Using citizen input

A community needs assessment is an important part of designing any service project. Assessing community needs can be as simple as taking a walk through a neighborhood or as complex as surveying the entire city. It is important to focus on the community when identifying what is needed. By working together with community members, volunteer managers will build community awareness and help ensure community buy-in and support for the organization's service efforts.

Program coordinators can use a variety of methods to assess community needs. Select one that fits the program's capacity and the scope of the volunteer effort. A one-day project may benefit from an assessment technique that is less time-consuming, whereas for a long-term project, in-depth assessment ensures that resources are being utilized effectively.

Recruiting volunteers

Recruitment is the process of enlisting volunteers into the work of the organization. Because volunteers give their time only if they are motivated to do so, recruitment should be seen as the process of showing people they can do something they already want to do. Recruitment may be for long term or short term projects.

In Dublin, Ohio, the volunteer resources team recruits for programs and initiatives such as the theater, children's wellness, and special events.¹⁶ Most people do not identify with volunteering with a local government, but they will identify with a theater, a park, a one-time event, or a career exploration model. In addition, many jurisdictions have found that—aside from having their own internal volunteer service coordinators embedded within departments such as police or parks and recreation—building structured alliances with organizations such as HandsOn affiliates, the National Association of Volunteer Programs in Local Government, local Directors of Volunteer Services in Agencies, university service groups, companies or corporate volunteer councils, United Way organizations, and state service commissions helps ease the stress of recruitment.

Volunteerism and effective policy

Organizations that encounter the greatest success are those able to combine volunteer desires with effective policy. In addition to developing a high-quality program and plan, measuring volunteer impact, reporting to the public, and assessing and evaluating the volunteer program, it is important to develop marketing and PR campaigns that highlight accomplishments to ensure that programs stay on target and everyone understands the end goals and results.

Some cities, such as New York, have focused their efforts on driving volunteers to a activities that address specific local challenges. After defining their priorities clearly, New York also developed a public campaign to champion volunteer efforts, asking everyone in their city to think about what they have to offer and positing that everyone has something to give (nyc.gov/service). Other cities, such as Plano, Texas (plano.gov/VIP), and Dublin, Ohio (dublin.oh.us/volunteer), have established broad-based programs that provide a strong example of how service can be incorporated into a city's daily life.

Ways to conduct a community needs assessment

- **Brainstorming:** Gather program staff, volunteers, and/or other community members to brainstorm community issues and needs. As a group, examine the causes and effects of the issue and then brainstorm potential projects to address the needs identified.
- **Community dreams:** As you meet and mingle with people, ask them about the changes they would like to see happen. If they had unlimited resources, what would they like to change? How would they go about changing it?
- **Community walk:** Hold a forum to collect information from community members about issues and needs. Ask them to offer suggestions for potential projects.
- **Surveys:** Conduct a formal or informal survey of community members to identify issues and needs. Surveys might include questions such as: What problems do you see in the community? What types of service projects would be most beneficial for the community? What two things do you want to change in the community?
- **Request for projects (RFP):** Soliciting for projects also streamlines project development processes by getting all details of the potential project outlined up front.
- **Targeted requests:** Most projects have parameters such as timeframes, types of volunteers, issue areas impacted, or geography that help narrow down project possibilities. Thus, it is sometimes best to make personal, targeted requests to those who are known to meet the project's parameters.
- **Response to volunteer interests:** Volunteers may express interests in tasks such as painting, reading with children, or affecting particular issue areas such as hunger, homelessness, or HIV/AIDS. These interests can be matched with the needs discovered in the assessment process.

Source: "Take Root Project Development Guidebook" (Atlanta: HandsOn Network, 2006), 7–8. Developed in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service under cooperative agreement #05TAHGA001. nationalserviceresources.org/takeroot-project-development-guidebook (accessed April 20, 2010).

Appendix D gives additional examples of how cities are utilizing volunteers to meet specific policy objectives. While these cities may also have broad volunteer objectives, they have developed specific program models around issues such as education, environmental sustainability, economic development, and public safety.

Strategies and tactics to ensure long-term success of a volunteer program

Success strategy	Supporting tactics
Continual engagement of and partnership with community stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community leadership programs ▪ Partnerships with nonprofit leaders and executives
Ongoing definition of risk management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Liability oversight ▪ Confidentiality agreements ▪ Screening and grievance procedures ▪ Volunteer policies ▪ Safety training and checklist ▪ Terms for dismissal/termination
Clarity with collective bargaining units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transparency about volunteer roles ▪ Planning with employee unions and union contractors to avoid displacement issues
Clarity with staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transparency about volunteer roles ▪ Defined staff expectations
Long-term integration with human resource and talent management programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volunteer evaluations ▪ Volunteer training ▪ Promotion of volunteers to leadership roles

Conclusion

As interest in volunteering grows, it is important to thoughtfully dissect what makes a volunteer experience meaningful and what makes volunteers continue to deepen their contributions to the common good. Local governments represent a critical piece of the puzzle in creating tipping points for local volunteer activation. Service and volunteerism is creating real impact in cities large and small, through nonprofit, community-based, faith-based, and educational institutions, and through innovative community programming. Combining the experience, innovation, depth, and breadth of these long-standing volunteer management and activation organizations with the power and policy objectives of cities and municipalities can raise the tide of service—building a stronger, healthier democracy and promising great change for individuals and communities alike.

Notes

- 1 Christopher W. Hoene and Michael A. Pagano, “Research Brief on American Cities: City Fiscal Condition in 2009,” National League of Cities Research Brief, September 2009, Issue 2009-2, p. 1, nlc.org/pressroom/press_room.aspx (accessed April 20, 2010).
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- 3 Susan J. Ellis, “Volunteerism and the Government Sector,” *U.S. Society and Values* (USIA’s electronic journal), Vol. 3, No. 2, September 1998, italy.usembassy.gov/pdf/ej/ijse0998.pdf (accessed April 20, 2010).
- 4 City of Redmond—Civic Engagement, Metropolitan Design Center, University of Minnesota, 2007, Information Sheet 1: Integrating Health into Comprehensive Planning, designforhealth.net/pdfs/Information_Sheet/BCBS_ISHealthCompPlanning_082307.pdf (accessed April 28, 2010).
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- 9 Volunteering in America, volunteeringinamerica.gov (accessed April 20, 2010).
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- 11 “Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement,” Harvard School of Public Health, 2004, pp. 6–12, hsph.harvard.edu/chc/reinventingaging/Report.pdf (accessed April 20, 2010).
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Additional resources

Volunteer activation and management

Energize, Inc. is an international training, consulting, and publishing firm specializing in volunteerism. energizeinc.com

HandsOn Network inspires, equips and mobilizes people to take action that changes the world. Its network includes more than 250 Action Centers that facilitate over 30,000 volunteer projects a month that align with specific community needs. handsonnetwork.org

National Service Resource Center is the knowledge management training and technical assistance provider to the Corporation for National and Community Service. nationalserviceresources.org

National Association of Volunteer Programs in Local Government is a national member organization of city and county professional volunteer administrators. navplg.org

ServeNet mobilizes and empowers the volunteer service community to tackle some of the toughest challenges facing local communities. servenet.org

Service Leader offers specialized resources for volunteers, leaders and managers of volunteers, and instructors and thought leaders. serviceleader.org

Service in cities and beyond

Blueprint for Change's online manual is designed to help city leaders develop a comprehensive service plan and a coordinated volunteer management strategy. blueprintforchangeonline.net

Cities of Service is a bipartisan coalition of the mayors of large and small U.S. cities who work together to engage citizens to address great contemporary challenges. citiesofservice.org

Service Connection is an online community for discussing and sharing ideas about service and volunteering in your community. serviceconnectiononline.org

Appendix A. Common terms of service and categories of volunteers

Terms of service

- Ongoing: This volunteer is helping on a regular, scheduled basis and may continue providing service over many months or years.
- Short term: This volunteer may assist with a special event or project or may be on call. Service hours and length of service will vary. Often the volunteer will assist for 25 hours or less within a calendar year.

Special categories of volunteers

- Youth: An individual who is under 18. Parental consent is required for the youth to participate. In practice, volunteer opportunities start at age 12 and may require a parent or guardian to volunteer with the youth.
- Student intern: An individual attending high school or college who receives academic credit for their volunteer service but is not paid.
- Corporate volunteers: Often provide assistance for short-term activities and may want to create an opportunity for team building.
- Employees of the city and its nonprofit affiliates: Employees volunteer for activities outside their regular job classification, and their volunteer service is separate from any paid work responsibility.
- Work experience: An individual interested in gaining or increasing experience in a particular field. May be referred through a local school, work-study program, job corps, or adult re-entry program such as through AARP. May receive pay from the referring agency, but not from the city.
- National service: An individual from a federal program such as AmeriCorps, Foster Grandparents, VISTA, RSVP, or other service corps. They may receive a stipend or paid expenses through that program but are not paid by the city.
- Court referral: An individual who has been referred by a local agency and has been sentenced by a court to provide volunteer service in the community.
- Community service: An individual, club, troop, or group that, as part of an assignment or program, needs to complete volunteer service, often a short-term project.
- Service learning: This term is used by educators to highlight that community involvement by students should be combined with an educational component. Often there is a reflective process, and service and learning are balanced.
- Advisory boards and committees: Community members provide policy direction, resources, and services for programs.

Source: Mary Lynn Perry, "Definition of a volunteer," *VolunteerToday.com*, January 2004. volunteertoday.com/ARCHIVES2004/Jan04localgovt.html (accessed April 8, 2010). Reprinted with permission from *VolunteerToday.com*.

Appendix B. Volunteer position description worksheet

Title: _____

Purpose/objective: _____

Location: _____

Key responsibilities: _____

Qualifications: _____

Time commitment: _____

Training/support provided: _____

Benefits: _____

Day-to-day volunteer supervisor: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Web site: _____

Overall volunteer supervisor: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Appendix C. Municipal volunteer program planning checklist

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> Identify champions | Who is passionate about the potential of volunteer engagement to address city priorities? Who has the appropriate position with the skills set for leading, engaging and advocating the effort? |
| 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Assess landscape | How are departments already using volunteers? Formally or informally? Long-term or episodically? |
| 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Frame city priorities | What are the two to three strategic priorities where volunteers can help scale work or deepen impact? |
| 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> Map priority roles within departments | How do the volunteer roles support priorities within departments? Across the city? |
| 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Build clear definition of “volunteer” | Who is considered a volunteer (service-learning students, board and commission members, career explorers, etc.)? Work with human resources to make this distinction clear. |
| 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> Clarify purpose | What are clear job descriptions and reporting requirements for all parties involved? |
| 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> Clarify deliverables and measures of success | What does success look like for volunteer, department, and city? How will this be measured? |
| 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> Build support | How will you engage department leaders, volunteer supervisors, and so forth in the new work of volunteer management? |
| 9 | <input type="checkbox"/> Build adequate training for volunteer managers | How will you ensure that staff has skills to manage volunteers effectively? |
| 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Create space for citizen input | How can you ensure that community members have a voice in which needs volunteers will be addressing? |

Appendix D. Sample volunteer programs addressing specific community issues

Issue area	City	Program	Description
Education	Asheville, North Carolina (Pop. 382,540)	21 st Century Community Learning Program	A school program for middle and high school age youth. Volunteer positions include homework and academic tutors, dance program assistant, gardening and outdoors assistant, and assistant for recreational activities.
	Cincinnati, Ohio (Pop. 331,285)	Volunteer Surveillance Team	Provides trained, skilled citizen volunteers to assist the police department in crime surveillance operations. These operations are conducted on a district level and coordinated through the patrol administration office. There is no physical contact or enforcement by any member.
Community development	Oxnard, California (Pop. 185,717)	Peacemakers Program	A police–clergy council collaboration through which former gang members are recruited as volunteers in violence prevention. Their primary task is to contact family and friends of shooting victims within the first 24 hours in an effort to prevent revenge killings.
	Greenville, South Carolina (Pop. 56,000)	Authentic Youth Civic Engagement (AYCE)	A city–United Way partnership offering opportunities for middle and high school students to engage in every facet of the community. School, neighborhood, city, and community-based organization teams are developing plans to create opportunities within city government where young people can make the greatest contributions in their areas of focus.
Environment	Dublin, Ohio (Pop. 41,093)	The Green Team	Attends education sessions and volunteers on topics related to their new knowledge. Topics include water quality, native planting, composting, and invasive plant removal. The team partners with city departments to establish ongoing recycling programs for shoes, bicycles, and other common goods.
	Boulder, Colorado (Pop. 94,673)	Open Space and Mountain Parks Volunteers	Restores natural habitats, maintains and builds trails, teaches interpretive programs, monitors animals and rare plants, greets visitors, and inspires the greater community.

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Ann I. Mahoney, *Director*
Jessica Kemp, Acquisitions Editor
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Charlie Mountain, *Graphic Designer*

Author Contact Information

Michelle Nunn
CEO, Points of Light
600 Means Street NW
Atlanta, GA 30318
munn@pointsoflight.org

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