

# Volunteer Tips and Strategies

## *Topic 6: Measuring Outcomes and Telling the Story*



You probably have a sense that your organization's volunteers and staff members are "doing good work." But how do you know the differences your programs, services, and volunteers make?

How do you prove it to current and potential donors and volunteers? They want to know what their time, effort, and money changes. How can you use this information to tell the whole story about the impact of volunteer engagement to your stakeholders?

Whenever you hear results that consist only of the numbers, try asking one provocative question: ... "So what?" ... Non-profit leaders, including staff and board members, too often get the following type of information in briefings or annual reports: "5,871 volunteers put in 48,729.3 hours this quarter; that's an average of 8.3 hours per volunteer, a 1.1% increase over this time last year."

While those statistics are useful to collect, they do not reveal the impact the agency and its volunteers are creating. Essential "So what?" questions include:

What did those 5,871 people accomplish? (Hours are not an accomplishment by themselves!)

What changed in the lives of the people they served because of their efforts?

How do you know?

Successful staff-volunteer partnerships - those that consistently achieve measurable results - have powerful impacts on both the community and the organization itself. ... Use the impacts of your volunteer program in strategic planning and staff performance appraisals and witness how results-oriented volunteer engagement standards bring accountability to your board, staff, and volunteers.

Feature the impacts of your volunteer program in annual reports, marketing, and fundraising campaigns, and watch your story transform into an invitation for others to become volunteers, donors, event participants, and future organization leaders. Through a compelling story, you can position your organization's volunteer program as the means to fulfil many high priority strategic needs.

### **Average Values of Volunteer Time**

To help document the enormous impact volunteers have, each year Independent Sector compiles the Value of Volunteer Time, which helps nonprofit organizations quantify the enormous value volunteers provide. The 2010 average figures are:

Pro bono service = \$120 per hour  
General volunteering = \$21.36 per hour

### **Tips and Food for Thought:**

- Track the number of volunteers and hours of service they perform

- If volunteers are serving clients, either track the number of clients volunteers help you serve or do the math to estimate how many of the total number of people served by your organization were served by volunteers
- Measure what changes you have seen in your clients or organization because of the service provided by volunteers.
- If you have difficulty determining the specific impact of volunteers working alongside staff, frame your results to show how volunteers contributed to the outcomes you achieved.
- Calculate the dollar value of volunteer time donated to your organization
- Volunteers are not "free." Estimate the level of resources you expend to recruit and manage your volunteers. Subtract that from the total dollar value of volunteer service to see the true net gain for your organization.
- Share the outcomes/impacts you have measured with volunteers so they can see the value of what they provided to your organization.
- Share the outcomes/results you have measured with other community stakeholders through reports, blog, website, press releases, etc.



## Useful Websites:

### **Kansas Volunteer Commission**

[www.KanServe.org](http://www.KanServe.org)

### **Hands On Network**

<http://www.handsonnetwork.org/nonprofitgov/toptools>

### **Independent Sector**

<http://www.independentsector.org>

### **National Service Resource Center**

<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/>

### **Taproot Foundation/CECP Pro Bono Action Tank**

<http://www.taprootfoundation.org/leadprobono/state/>

### **Volunteer Match**

<http://www.volunteermatch.org/nonprofits/resources/>

### **Volunteering in America**

<http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/>

## Best Practices/Notes: