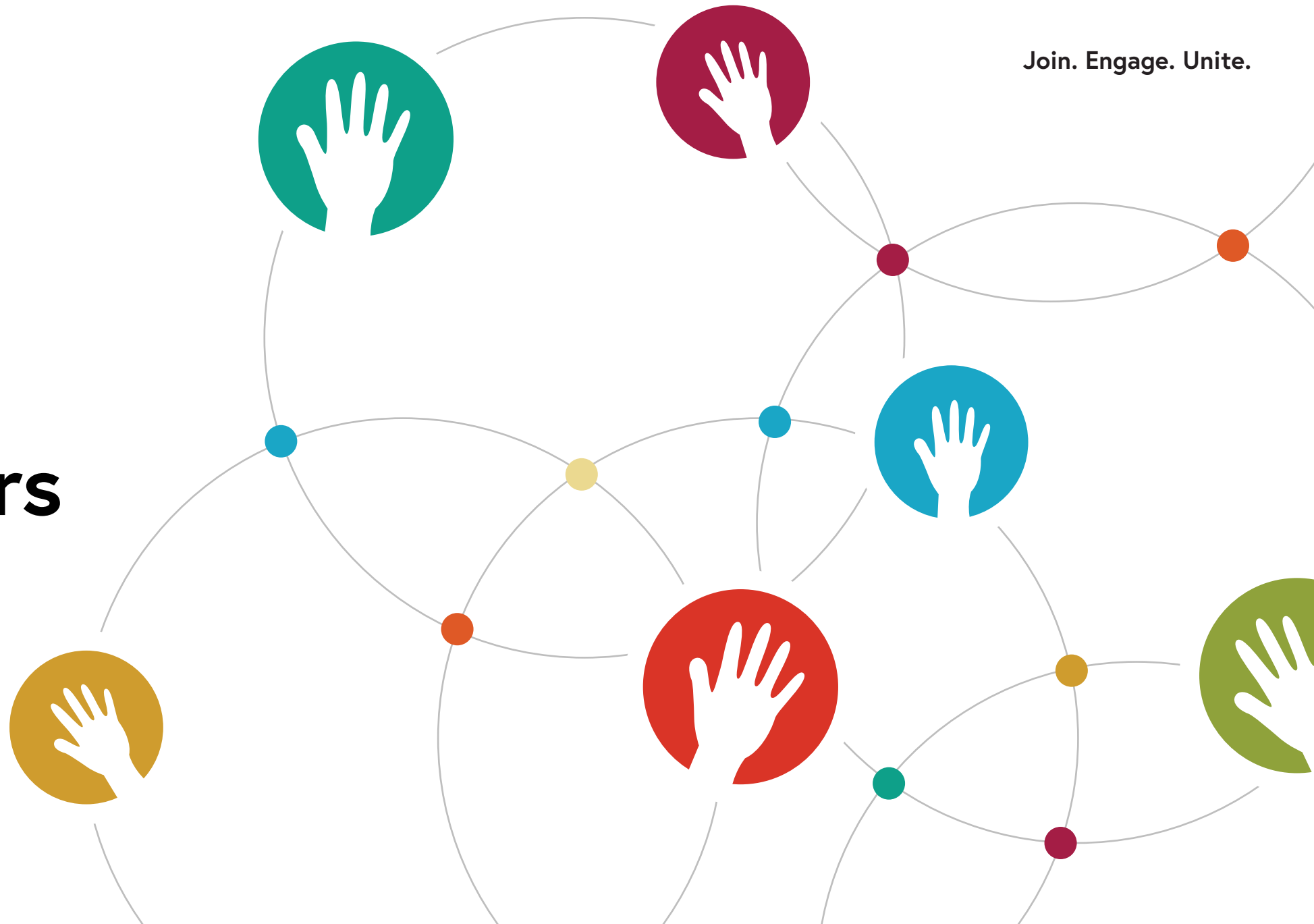




Join. Engage. Unite.

Value of Volunteers



The idea of service or volunteering, making a choice to act in recognition of a need from a place of communal responsibility and without concern for self, is an idea seemingly as old as time itself and ingrained in American life.

In the earliest days, colonists looking to survive their first harsh winters on the shores of New England banded together. In 1736, Benjamin Franklin created the first volunteer fire department in the country. And, in the 19th century, the first formal charitable organizations were created during the Great Awakening. Throughout history, volunteers have played an invaluable role in our growth, safety, evolution and success as a society.



Today's volunteers remain a tremendous resource for both donor- and member-focused nonprofits. Absent volunteers, many organizations would be unable to deliver programs, raise funds or serve clients.

Yet despite their importance, volunteers often remain an unsung, misunderstood hero whose true contribution is ambiguous at best. A recent survey¹ of nonprofit professionals suggests 45 percent of organizations don't measure the impact of volunteers with 34 percent attributing the failure to a lack of resources and tools, 29 percent reporting a lack of skills or knowledge prevented measurement and 25 percent citing a lack of time. Many organizations looking to understand their impact and value focus instead almost exclusively on the dollars and cents coming into their organization.

But, why?

If the contributions of those giving their time, talent and effort to a need or cause are (truly) mission-critical for an organization, then why isn't the value of volunteers treated with the same diligence and care given to donations, event performance, membership dues and other assets necessary to a nonprofit's success?

Whereas the volunteers of yesteryear may have chosen service to a nonprofit in lieu of professional work, today's volunteers are more apt to do so as an alternative to other leisure activities or hobbies. Nonprofits must understand, document, articulate and recognize their value, cultivating relationships with each individual and engaging volunteers as respected partners in their organization's mission - not as unpaid employees.



Today's Volunteer

A survey released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2016², the most recent year available, shows that approximately one-quarter of Americans take the time to volunteer. And, at the highest level, survey data from the Corporation for National and Community Service³ (CNCS) suggests volunteers tend to be married Caucasian women. The largest age group for volunteers was 35-44, the CNCS survey said, and volunteers were most likely to be parents with children under 18. The survey also found that volunteers tend to be highly educated, with the gap between those with a bachelor's degree or higher and those with only a high school diploma of more than 23 percentage points.

Most volunteers report working with either one or two organizations for a median of 52 volunteer hours per year.



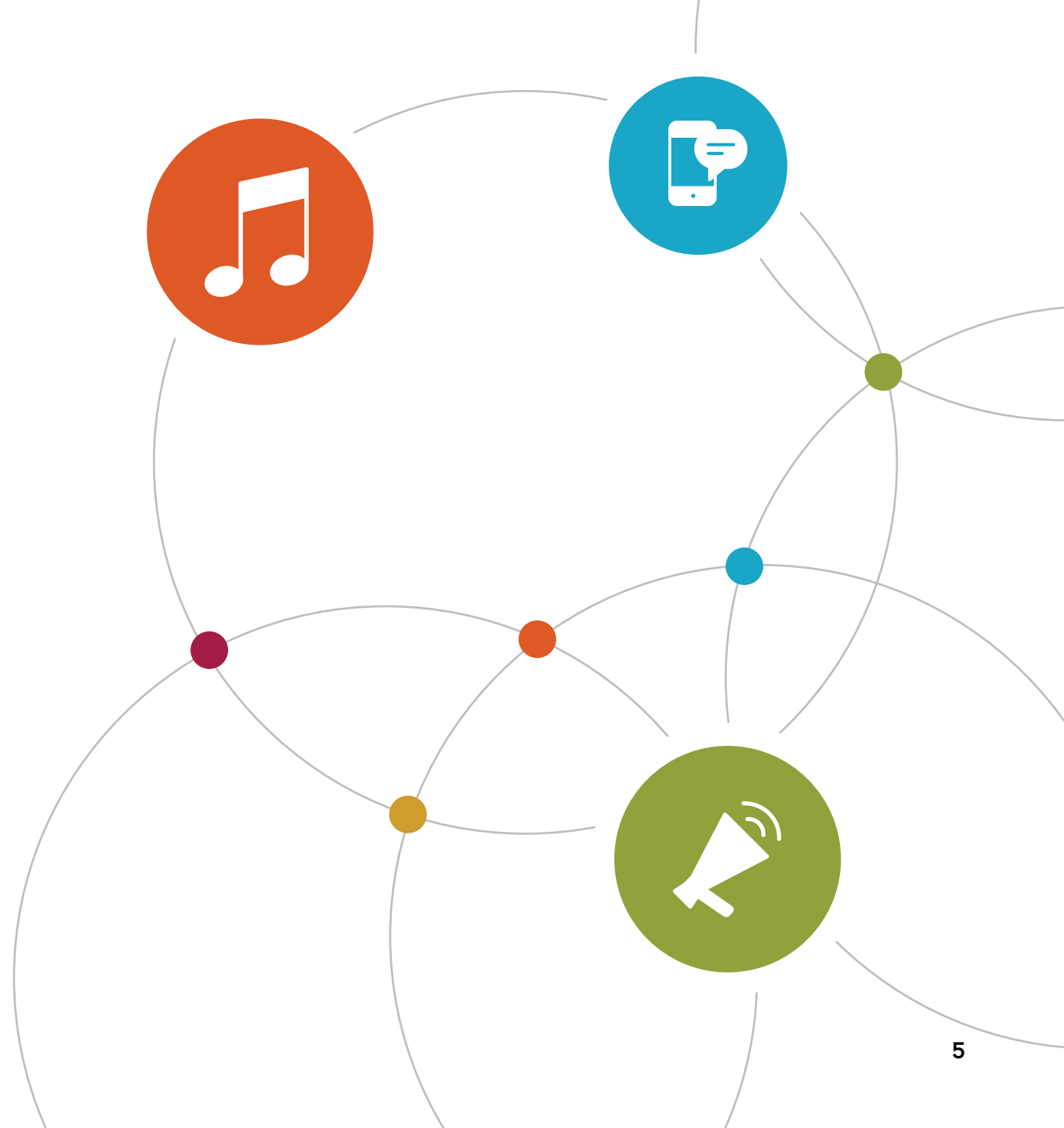
1/4

**of Americans take
the time to volunteer.**



Different Generations, Different Value

Considering the generational differences sociologists have studied, for everything from purchase behavior to entertainment and food preferences, it's not surprising to see those differences extend to volunteerism as well. While CNCS survey data suggests those aged 35-44 were most likely to serve (28.9 percent), unique attributes and stage-of-life milestones present unique opportunities for nonprofits looking to better understand and engage their volunteers.



The Value of Perspective: Welcoming Baby Boomers

When it comes to prospective volunteers, Baby Boomers, the generation of 77 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964, represent a huge opportunity for nonprofits. Per U.S. Census data, the numbers of volunteers age 65 and older will swell to more than 13 million in 2020. What's more, that number will continue to rise for many years to come, as the youngest Baby Boomers will not reach age 65 until 2029. Volunteering also offers significant health benefits for these Baby Boomers navigating the complex transition from full-time career and family building to retirement. According to the American Association of Retired Persons⁴ (AARP):

- Almost two-thirds of Senior Corps volunteers reported a decrease in [feelings of isolation](#), and 67 percent of those who first reported they "often" lack companionship stated that they had improved social connections.
- Seventy percent of volunteers who initially reported five or more symptoms of [depression](#) reported fewer symptoms at the end of the first year.
- Sixty-three percent of volunteers who initially indicated three or four symptoms of depression reported fewer symptoms after one year.

In addition to the sheer opportunity presented by their generation's size, Baby Boomer volunteers provide value through their experience, with a broad range of skills, talents and experience. Access to this maturity and competence will prove invaluable in solving and resourcing solutions for a wide range of social problems in the years ahead.



Realizing the Value of Baby Boomer Volunteers

To attract Boomers to volunteering, nonprofit groups should "re-imagine" roles for older American volunteers, making available opportunities that embrace their expertise and background. This approach is essential in driving value not only in the acquisition of Boomer volunteers but also in their retention.

Current data suggests three out of every ten Boomer volunteers choose not to volunteer in the following year. The CNCS reports⁵ volunteer retention rates are highest for Baby Boomers whose volunteer activities are professional and managerial, engaging in music or some other type of performance, tutoring, mentoring, and coaching (74.8 percent, 70.9 percent, and 70.3 percent respectively). Volunteer retention is lowest for volunteers who engage in general labor (55.6 percent).



Embrace the Enthusiasm: Capturing the Energy of Younger Volunteers

What they lack in the experience shown by Boomers, younger volunteers make up for in enthusiasm. Even in the face of complex social issues including climate change, terrorism, and income inequality, polls⁶, statistics⁷, and anecdotal data⁸ suggest Millennials and Gen Z bring to volunteer opportunities a strong social conscience.

Millennials, born between 1981 and 1991, have transcended early labels as "Slacktivist" and now include both those on the cusp of middle age busy balancing work and family and younger adults early in their careers. With experience to contribute, Millennial volunteers can provide tremendous value as members of committees or advisory boards. Millennials with significant work experience can also provide support to nonprofits via pro-bono skills and via Young Professional groups. In fact, 77 percent of Millennials are more likely to volunteer if they can use their skill set and if they see the impact of their time or donations⁹.

Meanwhile, born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z continues to come of age with the youngest in the cohort just 6 years old and the oldest 22. However, 67 percent of Gen Z report volunteering in the last 12 months and 26 percent of 16 to 19-year-olds report that they volunteer on a regular basis¹⁰. Gen Z continues to be primarily interested in episodic volunteering with 70 percent contributing below 100 hours a year.

77% of Millennials are more likely to volunteer if they can use their skill set and if they see the impact of their time or donations.⁹





Role of Volunteers

Despite a wealth of interest from Americans across all generations, according to the Stanford Social Innovation Review¹¹ the nonprofit sector fails to manage volunteers effectively, resulting in a sub-par experience for both the constituent and organization. The result? More than one-third of those who volunteer one year do not donate their time the next year, resulting in an estimated \$38 billion in lost labor.

30%

of members are serving or
have served in a volunteer
role in the past

70%

have never volunteered

According to ASAE's *Achieving Mutually Beneficial Volunteer Relationships report*¹², associations report that an average of 30 percent of their members are serving or have served in a volunteer role in the past while the other 70 percent have never volunteered. Additionally:

- 33 percent reported having considerably *more* qualified volunteers than they can accommodate
- 32 percent reported having considerably *fewer* potential volunteers than positions
- Half of associations represented indicate that they have to accept some volunteers who are not as committed or qualified



Many nonprofits do not view their volunteers as strategic assets and have not developed a meaningful structure, or set of roles, which allow them to fully realize the value of those volunteering on their behalf. While opportunities should align closely to the available skills of donors and members, providing a list of volunteer roles can promote inclusion and engagement, ensure a diversity of volunteers and mitigate retention risk. Typical roles may include:



FORMAL ROLES

Overview

- Often organized around volunteer delivery of services
- Structured with defined supervision and a strong emphasis on policies and procedures to ensure the quality of services being delivered
- More business-like approach with organizational oversight of activity, resourcing and measurement of outcomes

Examples

Hospital volunteer, Volunteer driver for community service organization, School liaison, Animal Shelter volunteer, Museum docent or tourism volunteer



GOVERNANCE ROLES

Overview

- Individuals volunteer to provide leadership and direction for the organization
- Often work as part of an articulated committee
- Work in clearly defined roles, with high levels of responsibility and accountability
- Well documented systems and procedures ensure transparency in reporting to stakeholders

Examples

Association Committee Member, Board Member, Chairperson, Young Members Committee, Communications Chair



SOCIAL ACTION ROLES

Overview

- Linked by a shared interest and desire for bringing about defined changes; driven by the motivation and interests of volunteers passionate about the cause
- Typically, loose structure but the need to achieve particular outcomes may drive a level of organization and assignment of specific roles

Examples

Volunteers attending a protest, Participating in a post-card campaign, in support of a specific candidate, Lobbying legislators for change on behalf of a specific group of people or cause





PROJECT-BASED ROLES

Overview

- Increasingly popular especially with younger volunteers; well-suited for those with who have limited time but still want to see the impact of their service
- Characterized by high levels of volunteer involvement over a short time period
- May exist within formal programs but may also be set up exclusively to deliver a specific outcome or augment support provided formal volunteers

Examples

Volunteering to construct a new building, Fundraising and participating in a charity walk/run/ride, Supporting logistics for an event (e.g. a charity walk/run/ride or annual conference)



PRO-BONO ROLES

Overview

- Donation of specific professional skills, generally at no cost to the recipient organization but can also be done via reduced fees
- Many nonprofits are interested in recruiting pro-bono and skills-based volunteers but struggle to find ways to effectively leverage them to build capacity within their organization. Can provide significant value to nonprofits by supporting needs such as general operations, technology and professional services.

Examples

Volunteer to build and manage ongoing marketing efforts, IT volunteer, Volunteer grant writer

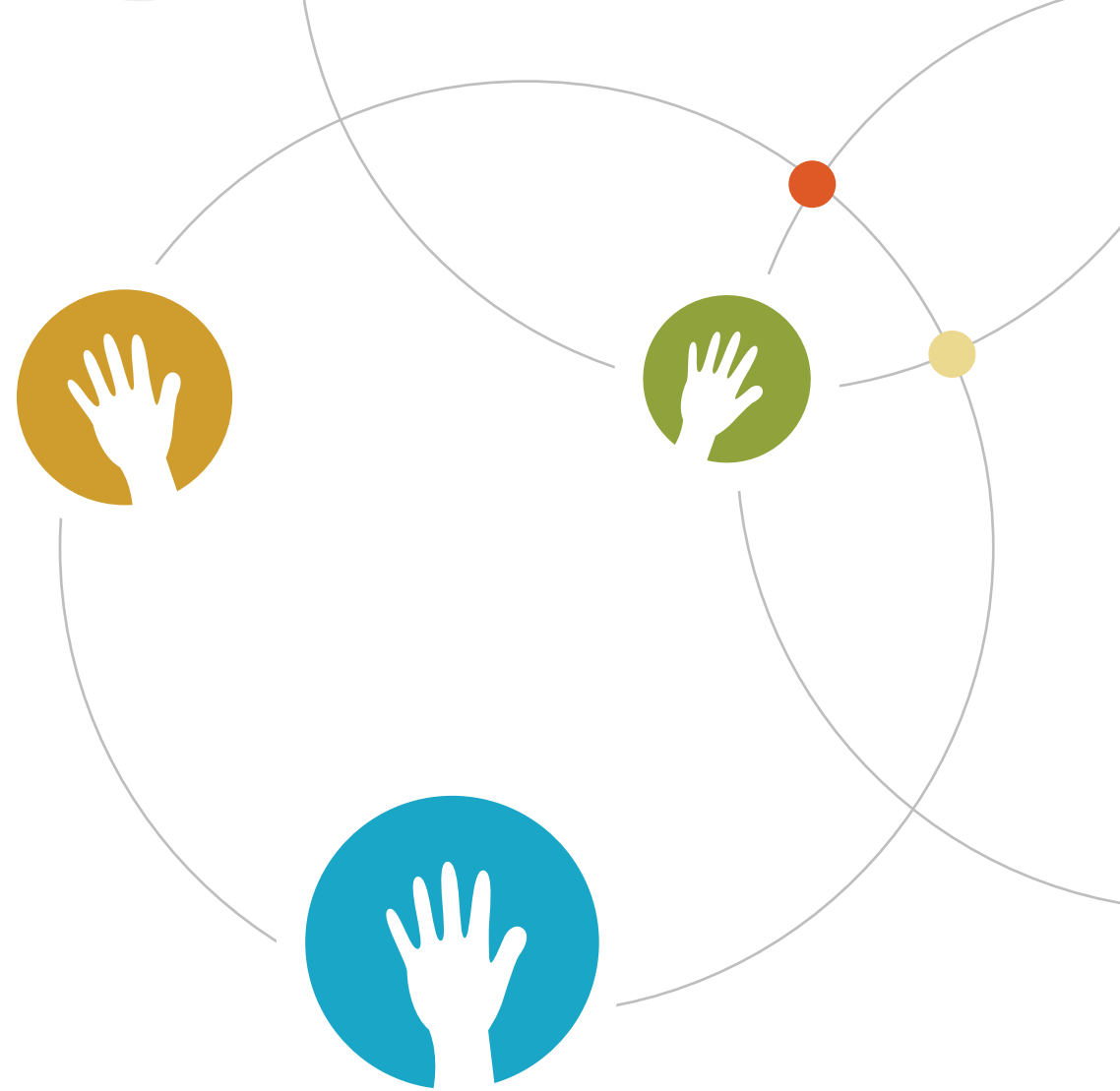


The Value of a Volunteer

Welcoming the volunteers who are raising their hand to support your organization, recognizing and capitalizing on their unique attributes and ensuring they have meaningful opportunities to contribute are effective first steps but are only a piece of the puzzle. In order to ensure a high ROI on volunteer programs, an organization must also have a culture which acknowledges, cultivates and celebrates their contribution.

66%

of volunteers are more likely to donate financially to the organization they support than those who do not volunteer their time¹³.



The soft benefits of volunteer involvement across a nonprofit are widely accepted, with industry averages suggesting volunteers are 66 percent more likely to donate financially to the organization they support than those who do not volunteer their time¹³.

Yet formal documentation of the cost savings delivered through volunteer involvement remains a powerful tool in helping organizations understand, track and maximize volunteer programs. The most recent data from Independent Sector suggests the value of a volunteer hour grew to \$24.69 in 2017, a 2.3-percent increase from 2016.

Built using the approximate hourly earnings of all production and nonsupervisory workers with an additional 12 percent to include a buffer for fringe benefits, the hourly average provides a benchmark helpful in articulating the value of volunteers across a variety of roles within an organization. Nonprofits can get additional clarity by adjusting the figure to accommodate:

- Pro-bono services from professionals including lawyers, doctors, technologists and others whose wages may reflect an hourly rate higher than the national average
- Wage rates specific to a particular geography, especially urban areas



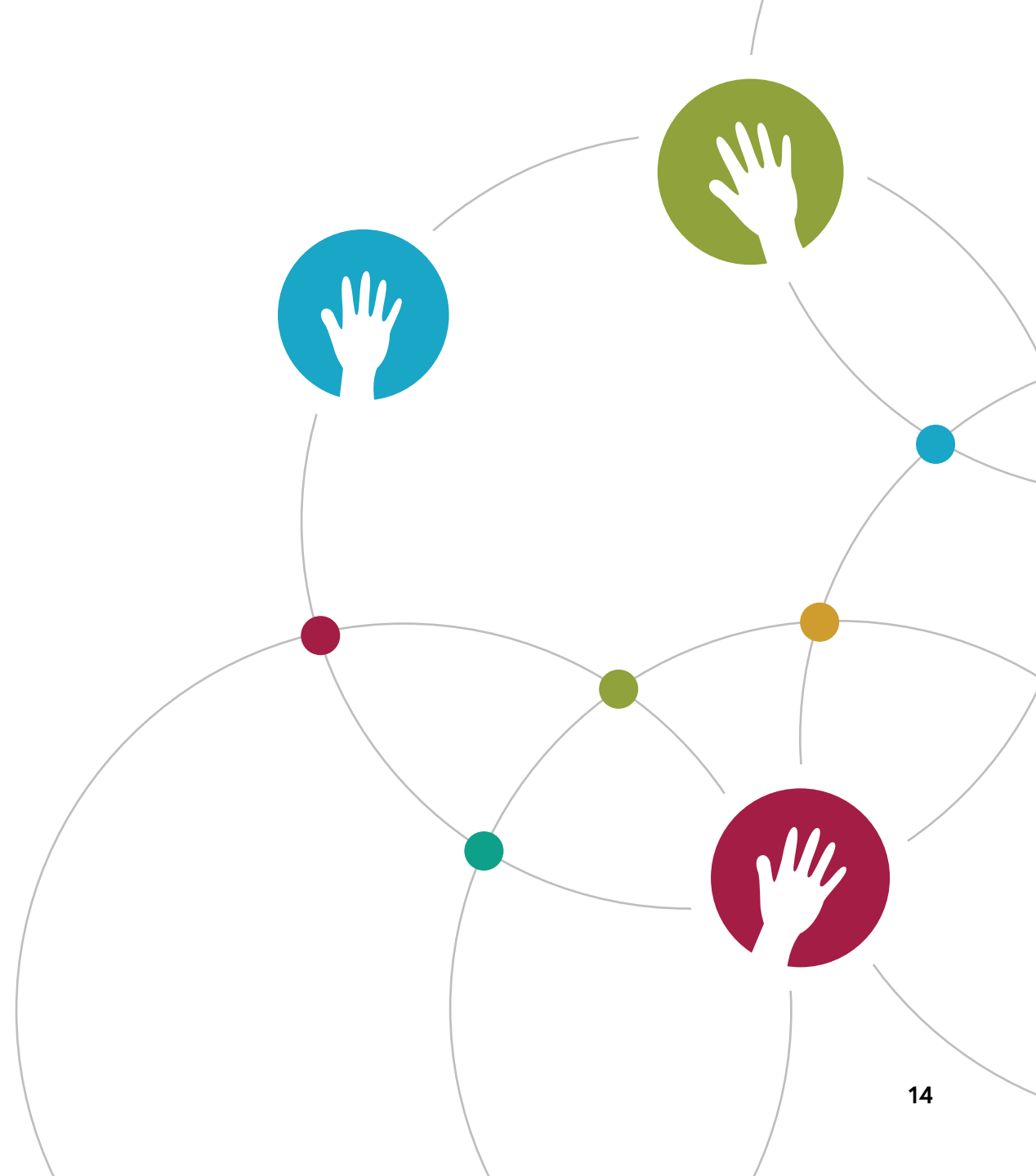
Quantifying the Impact: Growing the Number of Volunteers

As noted above, per ASAE's *Achieving Mutually Beneficial Volunteer Relationships report*¹⁴, associations report that an average of 30 percent of their members are serving or have served in a volunteer role in the past while the other 70 percent have never volunteered.

Improving volunteer participation can have significant impact on an organization's financials, introducing cost-savings which can then be redirected to supporting other programs.



With some basic data points and a volunteer hour valued at \$24.69, understanding the aggregate value additional volunteers can deliver to a nonprofit's bottom line becomes a straightforward exercise as illustrated here >>



Quantifying the Impact: Deepening the Relationship

Many organizations have high participation in short-term, project-based volunteer opportunities but may benefit further from improving engagement and driving an increase in the number of hours volunteers are willing to commit to an organization. For many organizations, driving even modest growth from an existing volunteer base already familiar with, and passionate about, can yield significant results.



See how you can achieve cost savings through increasing volunteer participation here >>

Based on the total U.S. contribution of 7.8 billion volunteer hours, the most recent CNCS data available, the 2017 value of volunteerism in the U.S. would have exceeded \$192 billion. Understanding the monetary value of volunteers to your organization brings focus to the big picture.

What could those additional cost savings do for the nonprofit sector? More importantly, what would even a fraction of that savings mean for you?



Volunteer ROI Calculator

Step 1

Calculate the monetary value of a volunteer

Number of members in your organization



Percentage of members who volunteer



annual time commitment



Engagement: The Key to Unlocking Value

Viewed as individuals or as a group, volunteers provide essential support for resource-constrained nonprofits, from helping out with daily operations behind the scenes to managing logistics for high-profile special events and acting as ambassadors to drive action. Understanding the financial value of the time they contributed, and the cost savings their efforts deliver to an organization, make this abundantly clear.

Engaging volunteers from day one ensures this value not only continues uninterrupted but grows further. Prioritizing a rewarding volunteer experience, with training, retention and appreciation make volunteers feel like part of an organization's mission and culture. Effective management of these constituents and the development of deep connections not only with the nonprofit, but between volunteers, lays the foundation for long term success.

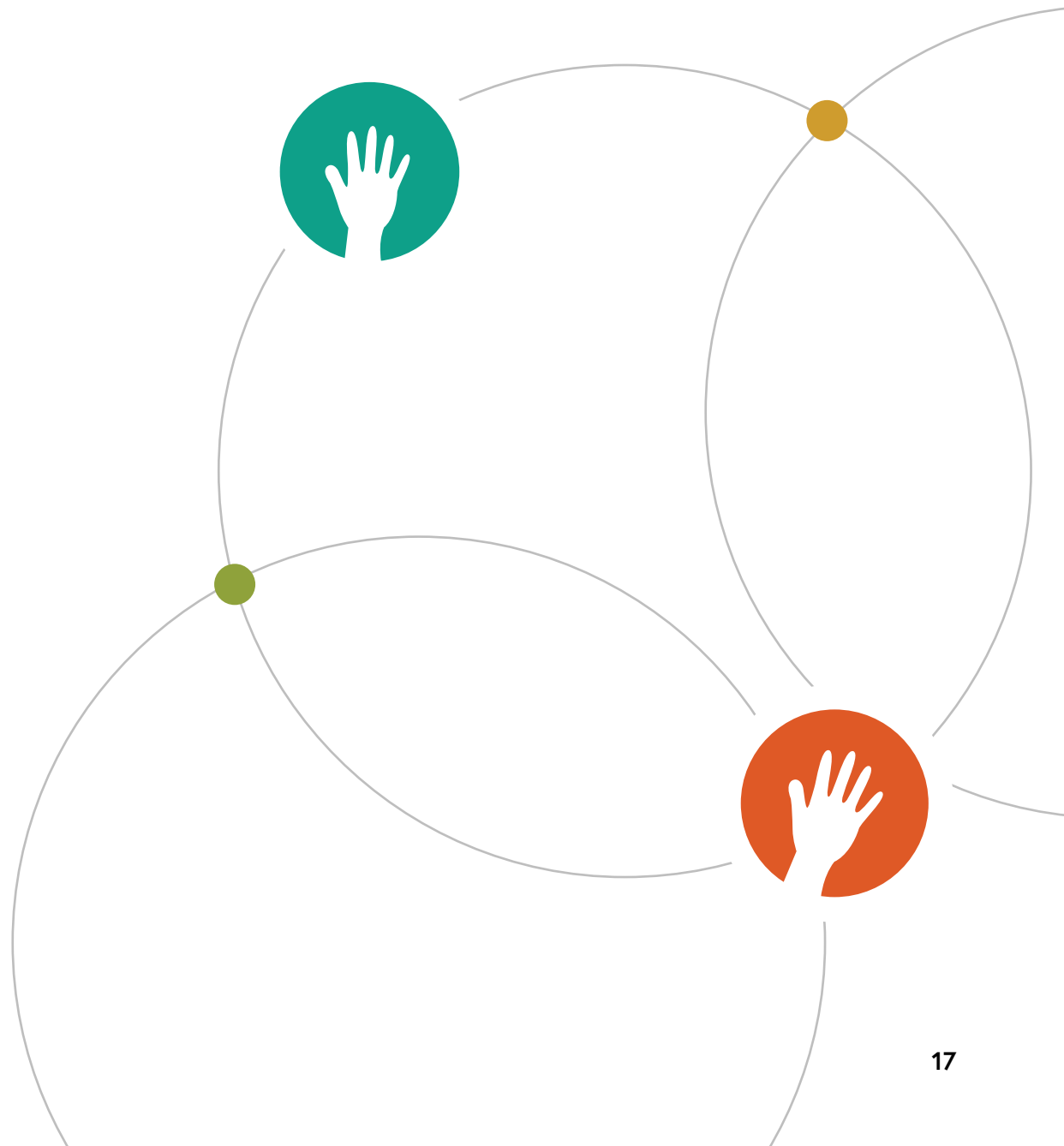


Strategies to Optimize Engagement

Streamline Onboarding

Volunteers allow nonprofits to do more than they could on their own but, like any member of your team, they need guidance to succeed. Educating volunteers and preparing them for their duties on the job ensures they have a positive experience and become a valuable asset to your nonprofit.

Remind volunteers of what your organization is trying to accomplish and how their efforts help. Train them for the tasks they will be performing as part of their role, set expectations and give them a tour of the tools available to support them. Online communities can prove invaluable here, providing not only a way to capture and share information but also easy-to-navigate access to resources and an automated way to walk volunteers through the information most beneficial to their role.



Connect the Right Person to the Right Opportunity

Purpose is a universal human need. When volunteers are matched with roles they are genuinely passionate about, interested in and able to do successfully, they are more likely to feel satisfied by the work and with your organization. Yet ensuring the right fit remains a struggle for many. Per ASAE¹⁵, Organizations wrestle both to find spots for willing volunteers and to fill open positions with qualified candidates. Associations divided themselves almost equally between three situations:

- They have more suitable volunteer-applicants than available responsibilities
- They do not have enough qualified candidates to fill available slots
- They have a good balance of capable people and open positions

These challenges are easily overcome with technology. Create and maintain a detailed view of a volunteer's skills, interests and qualifications. When looking to fill a role, use filters to identify candidates whose preferences offer the best fit for an opportunity or share relevant volunteer activities within a private community for added visibility.

Recognize Contribution

Building relationships with your volunteers isn't the only way to increase volunteer retention. Volunteer recognition acknowledges accomplishments, reinforces efforts and is a sign of appreciation. Frequent acknowledgement of their contribution offers a great way to show volunteers you value their time and commitment to your organization. Seeing how volunteer efforts directly affect your organization and/or cause can not only inspire action from those not currently serving but encourage those already giving their time to become more involved.

Don't Just Connect Volunteers to Your Organization – Connect them to Each Other

Strengthen a constituent's relationship with your organization by connecting volunteers to one another. Create digital homes for your organization's most enthusiastic supporters. Give them a place to spark conversation in exclusive forums, groups and blogs where everyone shares their commitment to your cause. Empower them to share their experience and show your impact by sharing photos and videos.



Wrapping Up

The concept of value assumes something has worth or importance and while frequently taken for granted, the value volunteers contribute to the nonprofit sector cannot be underestimated. However, understanding their value takes many forms.

Recognize the unique value volunteers bring to their roles to lay the groundwork for a rewarding experience. Create value for volunteers with variety of defined roles, ensuring they find fulfillment in their work and keep coming back for more. Quantify the value of volunteers through understanding the cost savings they provide and the impact of growing both the number of volunteers and the number of hours each serves. Ensure continued value from volunteers with a strong set of strategies to keep them engaged with your organization, and with each other.

A devoted volunteer can give thousands of hours to an organization over their lifetime, making a huge impact on your organization's mission. Treat volunteers, and the value they bring to your organization, with the same diligence and care given to other areas and watch their contribution soar.



About Personify

Personify is the market-leading Constituent Management and Engagement (CME) platform that empowers nonprofit organizations to better engage their constituents, maximize revenue and optimize operations. For over 20 years, Personify has served as the technology foundation for organizations of all sizes from the largest associations, charities, YMCAs and JCCs to emerging nonprofits. Nearly 25 percent of the U.S. population interacts with Personify through their involvement in nonprofit organizations. For additional information, visit www.personifycorp.com.



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